ERRATA'S

PAge 8. Line 1. dele a, p. 13. l. 14. for their r. the: p. 20. l. 10. for hiſ, r. its, p. 23. l. 26. for or, r. and, p. 47. l. 18. for product r. conduct, p. 47. l. 27, in the beginning add the word *when*, p. 56. l. 2. for whole r. upheld, p. 66. l. 14. dele *Common Sentiment*, p. 144. l. 14. in the beginning, add *the World*, p. 170. l. 13. for when, r. where, p. 174 l. 11. after expectancy, add off, p. 189. l. 19. for may r. many, p. 205. l. 10. after thirty, add years, p. 206. l. 19. for *Elizean* r. *Eliſinian*. p. 207. l. 12. for *mendiſius* r. *mendiſius*, p. 224. l. 16. for affords r. afforded, p. 258. l. 12. for words r. word, p. 259. l. 6. r. an, after in, p. 390. l. 24. for *ſaniores* r. *ſeniores*, p. 419. l. 26. for a, r a, p. 494. l. 21. for providential r. prudential, p. 407. l. 6. for by, r. be.

ERRATA'S

PAge 8. Line 1. dele a, p. 13. l. 14. for their r. the: p. 20. l. 10. for hiſ, r. its, p. 23. l. 26. for or, r. and, p. 47. l. 18. for product r. conduct, p. 47. l. 27, in the beginning add the word *when*, p. 56. l. 2. for whole r. upheld, p. 66. l. 14. dele *Common Sentiment*, p. 144. l. 14. in the beginning, add *the World*, p. 170. l. 13. for when, r. where, p. 174 l. 11. after expectancy, add off, p. 189. l. 19. for may r. many, p. 205. l. 10. after thirty, add years, p. 206. l. 19. for *Elizean* r. *Eliſinian*. p. 207. l. 12. for *mendiſius* r. *mendiſius*, p. 224. l. 16. for affords r. afforded, p. 258. l. 12. for words r. word, p. 259. l. 6. r. an, after in, p. 390. l. 24. for *ſaniores* r. *ſeniores*, p. 419. l. 26. for a, r a, p. 494. l. 21. for providential r. prudential, p. 407. l. 6. for by, r. be.

S. Scripturam Divinitùs esse revelatam, αὐτόπιστον, αὐτοκρατορικὴν, exploratò firmat iste Elenchus

Prodeat è Typographiâ.

Humph. London.

THE REASONABLENES OF Scripture-Beleif.

A DISCOURSE

Giving some account of those

RATIONAL GROUNDS

upon which the

BIBLE

is received as the

WORD of GOD.

Written by
Sir *CHARLES WOLSELEY* Bart.

LONDON,
Printed by *T. R.* & *N. T.* for *Nathaniel Ponder* at the *Peacock* in *Chancery lane* near *Fleet-street*, 1672.

Scripture-Relief.

upon which the

BIBLE

is received as the

WORD of GOD.

Written by

Six CHARLES WOLSELEY Bart.

Printed by T. B. Sc. for T. for Nathaniel Poulter at the Ruose in Chancery Lane near Fleet Street, 1672.

To the Earl of ANGLESEY:

My Lord,

Besides the common enemies to all these Paper-adventures, Those who suppose they can do much better; and such who are not pleased they have not done so well: from a twofold sort of Men I expect a severe reflection upon this undertaking; chiefly from those who make it their business to reject all Religion in gross as a thing no where Existing but in the Minds of sequacious and fearful Men, and deride all attempts made towards its rational justification:

And also from them, who suppose things of this nature, priviledged from all dispute or debate, things not to be proved but admitted, that all endeavours of this kind, are but an open arraignment of such Fundamentals as ought not to be question'd, a disservice done to the cause of Religion thereby, and at best in themselves but useless and impertinent.

The following discourse (My Lord,) as it is in its nature no way condited to the gust of any such men on either hand; so I must needs acknowledge my self to be best pleased with whatever is least so: The first are an absurd Generation, that by an empty prophane sort of discourse, which themselves call Wit, would fain Hector *us out of the wisest and best part of the world, make that the scorn of this Age, which hath been the most valu'd and most reverenc'd in all others; And whenever reduced to any sober and rational contest, have no other relief from the*

the ſhame of their own folly, then what they find in thoſe naked ſhelters of ignorance and confidence: Irreligion 'tis true in its practice hath been ſtill the companion of every Age, but its open and publick defence ſeems the peculiar of this; 'Tis but of late that men come to defend ill living, and ſecure themſelves againſt their own guilt, by an open defyance to all the great maxims of Piety and Virtue; 'Tis but of late the world hath been told, That the notion of a Spirit implies a conrradiction; That the Bible is no where in force as a Law Divine, but where by Laws civil and municipal 'tis made ſo to be; That Religion is nothing elſe but a fear of inviſible powers feign'd in the Mind, and fancyed from tales publickly allowed; *Theſe and moſt of the bad Principles of this Age are of no earlier a date then one very ill Book, are indeed but the ſpawn of the* Leviathan: *The other are a ſort of eaſie and*

credulous men, that derive their Religion no higher then Education & Custom, have taken up their greatest concerns upon trust, , and whensoever encounter'd but by any small artificer in the Scepticks, are sure to be sufficiently baffled, Themselves and Religion exposed to the utmost contempt; And upon all such attack's, they either go off wounded with a secret dislike of their own Profession, or oblige themselves to a stubborn and bruitish sort of drudgery, to believe that for which they find they are able to give no good reason: Would such dull men once be at leisure from doing nothing; would they once be persuaded to make but a salley into the exercise of their own Reason, 'twere no hard task to convince them, that nothing proves more fatal to the publick good of Religion, then this stupid sort of credulity; 'Tis from hence, and from that weak impotent defense of the most eminent Truths, that results naturally

rally from it, that Mens prophane Triumphs have been chiefly erected; 'Tis from hence that we hear of ſo many, ſo eaſily, and ſo often ſeduced; And 'tis thoſe Ages when Men fell off and retir'd from the rational proof of Religion, and ſunk into implicite Belief, and ignorant Devotion, from whence we may date moſt of the great ills of Idolatry and Superſtition, and from whence all thoſe devout fooleries, which have ſince ſo cumber'd the world, had their chiefeſt and firſt riſe: As the whole of Religion is declared to be a reaſonable Service, and can be no other, ſo all the Principles of it in order to its ſo being, muſt upon rational grounds neceſſarily be eſtabliſh'd, what ever Belief is built upon the credit of any Revelation, ought to be ultimately reſolved into a rational proof of that Revelation as ſuch, and what ever appears to us upon thoſe terms ſo to be, whatever can be ſufficiently

sufficiently proved to be revealed to us from God, from the Soveraign Power of its Author, puts in but a reasonable claim to our assent, though the matter of it in some things exceed the bounds of a humane capacity; And herein it is the Socinians *(who had they confin'd themselves to a rational proof that all we believe is revealed, had been of very good use to the Church) have greatly miscarryed, and when they would need subject all the matter of Revelation to a rational comprehension, fell much short of that credit ought to be given to all that God reveals, fell foul upon those two Fundamentals of our Religion,* the Union of the two Natures, and that of the Trinity, *and indeed have come much short of that Reverence all Nations have paid to their Gods, who by all their Mysteries still have professed to believe some things upon the score of Divine Credit, which by their own Reason they could not fully comprehend.*

Were

Were not the looſe Principles, My Lord, *of this degenerate Age, about the moſt Eſſential parts of Religion, ſomewhat more than a ſufficient* Apology, *for whatever is done this way; yet me thinks we can never inculcate too much, even unto the* beſt *men upon this Subject, and that upon theſe two Grounds*; Firſt, *becauſe 'tis from this Book, we derive all the certain notions we have of another, and a farther World, and the great account of all inviſible things*; *and Secondly becauſe 'tis the higheſt Motive we have to all good living; 'tis from hence, from the authority of this Book, that we are chiefly obliged to all that is holy and good, and engaged againſt all the corrupt practiſes of humane Life, when we conſider with what difficulty we attain in the firſt Caſe to a fixed and unſhaken belief of ſuch things as we do not actually ſee, and how apt we are in the latter to decline from the ſtrict Rules*

of

of a good life, nothing can ſeem more neceſſary then a rational inſurance about the great Foundation of all Belief and Practice in both.

That with a perfect ſecurity to our preſent and future welfare, we may rely upon this Book, as that great and only Revelation, by which God will inform, rule, and judge the world; I have hereby attempted to make evident, not only from its own excellent nature and compoſure, and ſuch viſible and open effects of a ſupreme and almighty power as accompanyed its firſt Publication, and laſted till the Church was ſo far built, that the Scaffolding might be ſafely taken down; but alſo from many other conſiderations, from whence an abundant teſtimony to its Divinity will appear to reſult: And this task if ſufficiently perform'd as 'twill give anſwer to all reaſonable doubts, and caſt a juſt contempt upon all prophane reproaches;

ches; ſo it will alſo reflect much upon thoſe,, who though they acknowledge this Book to come from God, yet not acquieſſing ſingly in the conduct thereof, declare it thereby inſufficient to thoſe great ends for which it appears to be intended; and ſuch are thoſe of the Roman Church *on the one hand, and all ſorts of* Enthuſiaſts *on the other, who by a twofold ſuperfœtation, that of endleſs Traditions, and that of new and continued Revelations, have rendred the whole Scriptures, if not uſeleſs, Yet as to their great end and deſign, altogether deficient and imperfect.*

My Lord, *I ſeek not by this Dedication to countenance a defence of the Bible, nor any way to ſecure my ſelf againſt the juſt reproach of an ill performance; the firſt would engage me in an open affront to a* Chriſtian State; *and the other oblige me to be too injurious to You, and that Candor and love to Truth*

Truth you possess; 'Tis alone that great Honour, and that entire affection I have for Your Lordship, that Interests Your Name in this matter, though there is nothing less needed by You than discourses of this nature, Yet there is nothing more due from me, then an open and publick profession that my self, and what ever I do, is devoted to Your Service. I know my Lord, *into what hands I commit these Papers, when I present them to You, that great hazard to which they are exposed by your first view, will sufficiently inure them to all future dangers; I consider that Judgement with which they are put to encounter, and want not a due sense what the success must needs be: I know also your remedying kindness, and am enough secur'd thereby, am in this case upon the same terms of relief, that he was that discoursed before* Cæsar, *who thus address'd to him,* Qui apud te Cæsar audent

UMI

audent dicere, magnitudinem tuam ignorant, qui non audent, humanitatem; *My Lord, as You were pleased before to allow that Method I used in discovering the* Unreasonableness of Atheism; *So I promise my self some acceptance in the account I now give You of the* Reasonableness of Scripture Belief, *as I know no better Property can be convey'd to the World, then a Rational Possession of God and his Word; So I am also much pleased that I have spent some part of my time in doing what You required, To whom I owe all that is due to the most Generous, and most lasting Friendship, and shall ever be as much as I can be, which is but what I ought to be,*

My Lord,

Your Lordships most true Friend,
And
most Humble & Faithful Servant,

CHARLES WOLSELEY.

Wil: Congreve.
Ex Jonis Authoris.
28° Augusti. 1672.

THE REASONABLENESS OF Scripture-Belief.

THat the *being of the Christian Religion* depends much upon the Credit and Authority of that Book we call the *BIBLE*, there needs little to be said to prove it. The instance were as hard to find, as 'tis unreasonable in it self to suppose, that any man should, at the same time, reject the *Bible* as *Fictitious*, and yet embrace the *Christian Religion* as *True*. For it must either be granted there are *No Laws* any where extant that do formally constitute this Religion (which is absurd to suppose of any Religion)

ligion) or they must needs be admitted *here*. No man can be a *Jew*, and renounce the *Old Testament*, nor he a *Mahumetan* that disclaim the *Alchoran*. Because, to deny the Authority of those *Books*, is, visibly to raise the great foundation of all profession and practice in those two Religions. Although the fact of Christs being in the World, and many other things relating to the Christian Religion, be attested to by other writings; yet the *Scriptures* are the onely means by which we come to a sufficient knowledge of a *Religion* established upon that foundation, and which alone, contain the *Laws* and *Constitutions* of such Religion. No considerable attempt has been, at any time made, to set the Christian Religion upon any other Bottom then the *Bible*, to promulge any other edition of *Christian Laws*, to write any *Counter-Story* of *Christ* and the *Apostles*; or is there extant in the World any *different* account of their *Doctrines*, from whence might be deduced a *Contrary* or *other* systeme of the *Christian Profession* from what is recorded in this *Book*?

Nor is it reasonable to believe there can be any foundation lay'd, whereon to erect Christianity, where the *Bible* is excluded. For, whatsoever has otherwise then by the *Bible*,

Bible, by writing or tradition, descended down to the World, touching the Christian Religion, has been either by its Friends, or its Enemies. For the Latter, no mention is made in any Heathen Writer, of any Christian Laws, nor indeed of any considerable matter at all relating to the Christian Religion, farther then what we find in the *Bible* it self: And so amounts to no more then a Cumulative help to its Credibility. And 'tis evident, those of the Heathen who have, at any time, opposed the Christian Profession, and disputed most against it, have opposed it as contained there. That Book being granted, on all hands, to comprise its Doctrine, and to be the stated rule of that Religion. For the former, whatever has been, by the writings or Traditions of such who embraced the Christian Religion, and gave their Assent to it, conveyed down to us, can never induce any other Rule of that Religion then the *Bible*. For, besides that all such Collateral traditions are, in their own nature, relative to the *Bible*, dependant upon it, and such as must necessarily stand and fall together with it; they have also come from the hands of those who have themselves Universally proclaimed the *Bible* in all Ages, to be the great and infallible Rule of the Christian Religion.

So that if Christian-tradition be credited the Authority of the *Bible* is thereby estiblished. And if it be dis-believed in that there can be then no good reason to receiv any other matter touching the Christian Religion upon the credit of that conveyance To retain therefore the name of a Christian and yet disown the *Bible*, is to become a perfect *Problem*. No such man can produce an Laws or Rules of his Religion, nor give an account wherein they are contained, or b whom or by what Church (with an exclusion of the *Bible*) they have been at any tim Received.

Nor can any man rationally make a Partia rejection of the *Bible*, and retain a Christian Profession from thence, in a Limited sens of his own. For a man to say, he receive the *Bible*, as he receives other credible writings, as a book generally True, and written by men that meant honestly and well, but believes it not written with an Infallible Spirit nor to carry a Divine Authority along with it, nor submits to it as such, is to say a thing extreamly incongruous to all good sense, and to indulge himself in a perfect Absurdity. For, the *Bible* comes to us with a claim o God's Authority attending it, speaks to us in his Name, is a Book that disowns all humane con-

contrivement, propoſeth it ſelf as written by Divine Inſpiration, and Immediate Direction from God, admits of no Compoſition for its Reception. In ſuch a caſe, there can be no Middle-way, but either we muſt receive this Book and ſubmit to it as ſuch, or elſe reject it with the juſteſt contempt imaginable. It is in nothing to be credited, if it be not in Truth what it pretends to be. For there cannot be a more vile and pernitious falſhood impoſed upon the world, then to counterfeit a Divine Law, and to pretend that to come from Heaven, and to be ſent us from God, which is nothing but the product of Men. Whoever will admit theſe premiſſes that the Scriptures were not written, in every part of them, by the infallible direction of the Holy Ghoſt, when they themſelves tell us that they were ſo, muſt needs deſcend to this concluſion, that they then contain the moſt impudent falſhood, and were compoſed by the worſt deſigners againſt mankind.

The Chriſtian Religion and the Scriptures being ſo related, and ſtanding in ſo near a conjunction as they do: The being of the one having ſo neceſſary a dependance upon the Truth and Authority of the other, 'Twill be eaſily granted to be the great concern of the Chriſtian Church in all ages to aſſert their Di-

vine Authority, and to justify that Book to be written by men that were indeed θεοπνευστοι, Divinely inspired, and to be sent us from God as that supreme Law by which he would inform, Rule, and Judge the World.

He that undertakes this Province, and designs to himself such a service, is obliged, First, To consider with whom he is like to encounter! And to proportion his defence to those various assaults the Scripture are usually exposed to. This being admitted (which it ought to be) that no man can, with any good Reason, close with the Christian Religion, and at the same time Renounce the *Bible*. That Maxime of St. *Austin* being undeniable, that *Contra Scripturas nemo Christianus*. There are but three sorts of men by whom the Scriptures can, at any time, be generally Attack, and from whose principles their sacred Authority can receive an Universal Invasion. First, Such who wholly deny the being of God (and consequently of all Religion, for God and Religion are Relatives) such who wallow in the mire of an Atheistical profession. Secondly, Such who admit the Being of God, and a supreme and first cause, but deny his providence, and believe he is no way concern'd about the World, nor troubles himself to exercise any Rule or Dominion

minion at all over it. Thirdly, Such who admit the Being of God, and the existence of Religion, and providence, but reject the Christian Religion, as not True, and embrace some other in opposition to it.

Of those first-born Monsters of Mankind, that *Anomalous* off-spring who deny the Being of God, whose principles contain in them the utmost dreggs of all humane Apostacy, and are of all others, the most wild and absurd, for, as *Cicero* sayes, *Deos esse, ita perspicuum est, ut is qui negat, vix eum sanæ mentis existimem. The Being of the Gods is so evident, that no man can be thought well in his wits that denies it.* A previous consideration is necessary to whatever is said upon this or any other Divine subject; and therefore I have already contested with such, and dispatcht all my concernes with them, in order to this matter, and the last converse I mean to have with that evil generation, of whom it may most truely be said, They are not only the avowed opposers of all Religion, but indeed they are *Hostes Humani generis, The common enemies of all mankind*: Who, by denying a Supreme Being above, demolish the great support of all well-being here below. Of this belief they were heretofore at *Athens*, in those primitive times of Atheism and first

dawnings of Speculative Irreligion upon the World; and therefore *Cotta* tells us, in *Cicero*, that when *Protagoras* began his Books with this Introduction to Atheism, *De Diis neque ut sint, neque ut non sint, habeo dicere, Athenienſium juſſu Urbe atq; Agro eſt exterminatus, Libriq; ejus in concione combuſti.* And he adds, *Ex quo equidem exiſtimo tardiores ad hanc ſententiam profitendam multas eſſe factos, quippe cum pœnam ne dubitatio quidem effugere potuiſſet.*

For thoſe ſecundary Enemies to the *Bible*, and together with that of all Religion, ſuch who admit the Being of God, but deny all Providence, and Divine Rule over the World; ſuch who out of ſhame, diſown the grand principle of Atheiſm, but yet, by this Method, ſecure all the effects of it to themſelves. Of thoſe a preliminary conſideration ought to be had. A previous confutation of ſuch principles, being of abſolute neceſſity to make way for the diſcourſe in hand. For it muſt needs be a vain and impracticable project to indeavour to prove any Book to be Divine, and a Law given forth from God, if there be no ſuch Law any where in Being; which we are ſure there never can be, if God no way concernes himſelf with what men do, nor exerciſes any Dominion at all over them:

'Tis

'Tis plain, ſuch principles do, *uno ictu*, diſpatch all Religion out of the World, put a perfect period to all Divinity, and render it a thing very abſurd, to ſubmit either in our belief or practice to any thing as Divine. To this purpoſe *Cicero* concludes in his firſt Book *De nat. Deor. Sin autem Dii* (ſays he) *neque poſſunt nos juvare, nec volunt, nec curant omnino, nec quid agamus animadvertunt, nec eſt quod ab his ad hominum vitam permanare poſsit, Quid eſt quod ullas Diis immortalibus Cultus, Honores, Preces, adhibeamus?* If the Gods be no way concern'd about us, to what end ſhould we worſhip or ſerve them? And *Cotta* in the ſame book tells *Velleius*, That *Epicurus*, by making God careleſs of the affairs of men, *Suſtulerit omnem funditus Religionem*: Has utterly ſubverted all Religion. *Quid eſt enim cur Deos ab hominibus colendos dicas, cum Dii non modo hominibus non conſulant, ſed omnino nihil curent, nihil agant?* The ſame *Juſtin Martyr* obſerved in the beginning of his Dialogue with *Tryphon*, ſpeaking to him of the opinion of thoſe Philoſophers who denyed the Doctrine of Providence. Says he, *Hoc vero ad quem illi referant finem intelligere difficile non eſt; Nam hoc efficit ſecuritas atque libertas loquendi, & eos qui hac docent ſectandi, & quod volunt agendi, & dicendi impunitas.*

Neque

Neque panam aliam metuens, neque bonum quodque sperans a Deo.

That men by a denyal of Providence, do only publish another Edition of Atheism is evident enough. 'Tis in it self equally destructive to all Virtue and Religion, and lies in no less oppofition to all true reasoning, to say the higheſt Being no way concerns himself with what men do here below, as to say there is no such Being at all. That there is such a being, and that this Being is a punisher of evil doers, and a Rewarder of them that do well, is the great Topick from whence all Religion, and all good Manners are derived. If God regard not what Men do, they are no more obliged in their actions then if there were no God at all: And 'tis not more unreasonable to deny that God Is, then to admit him to be, and then deny those things that must necessarily belong to such an Existence.

That the fixed belief of Gods Rule over the world accompanied the notion of his Being, amongst the best and wisest of the Heathen, will appear obvious, if we consult the writings of *Seneca*, *Plutarch*, *Epictetus*, *Simplicius*, and many others of them. *Balbus* in *Tully* thus begins his Speech. *Omnino dividunt nostri totam istam de Diis immortalibus quæstionem,*

nem, in partes quatuor. Primum docent esse Deos, deinde quales sint, tum Mundum ab his Administrari, postremo eos consulere rebus humanis. Those of our opinion always divide the question about the Gods into four parts; First, we teach that the Gods are: Then how they exist! Then, that the World is governed by them: And lastly, that they take the care of humane affairs. And *Tully* in his second Book *de Legib.* tells us, *Persuasum hoc fit a principio hominibus Dominos esse omnium rerum ac moderatores Deos, eaq; quæ gerantur eorum geri ditione atque numine. Men have believed this from the beginning that the Gods governed the World, and that all things were under their Dominion and Rule. Epicurus*, who first assaulted the Doctrine of Providence, and by a denyal of that found a way to transform the notion of God, so far as it concerns men, into a meer nullity, would needs suppose it a thing below the greatness of God to take any notice of humane affairs, or concern himself with what men did here. And therefore *Cotta* tells *Velleius* in *Cicero*, speaking of him, *In illis selectis ejus brevitusq; sententiis quas appellatis, κυρίας δόξας, hæc ut opinor prior sententia est, Quod Beatum & Immortale est, id nec habet nec exhibet cuiquam negotium. This was one of his chi-fest Aphorisms,*

risms, that the Blessed and Immortal Being had no imployment himself, nor occasioned any trouble to others, which appeared a thing so absurd in it self, and so Heterodox to all true Philosophy, that the best Moralists sharply rebuked his folly, thought this opinion of his to be *Turpis & indigna*, base and unworthy, and refused him the Honour to be stiled a Philosopher, who would be so unworthy to suppose that sloth and stupidity in the Deity, which every worthy and good man thought beneath himself. *Aristotle* (though no very good Divine, nor very Orthodox asserter of Providence, yet) so loathed this absurd fiction of *Epicurus*, and a total denial of Providence, that he speaks of it with this keen reflection: sayes he, Diversity of questions requires diversity of answers; Some ask whether Fire be hot! These must be answered by being made to touch it. Some ask whether their Parents are to be honoured! These are not to be discoursed with but rebuked. Others ask whether there be any Providence that Rules the world, and refuse to believe it without apparent demonstrations! Such men (sayes he) should be answered by a Whip, rather than by a Philosopher.

How extreme unreasonable the denial of Providence and Gods universal Rule over the world

world is, how unſuitable and oppoſite to thoſe conceptions of him our own Reaſons dictate to us! will ſoon appear, if we view over thoſe fond ſpeculations men have pleaſed themſelves with about this matter.

Some have confined providence to the Heavens, and limited it to what is above us. Will needs Imagine that God regards nothing beyond the Sphere of the Heavens, and that his Dominion reacheth no farther then the Heavenly Bodies; thoſe they acknowledge, are under a Divine diſpoſure. God ſettles (they grant) the Stars in their courſes, and orders all the Cœleſtial Bodies; but has no concern at all for any thing here below, nor regards what happens on this ſide the Clouds. This folly is ſufficiently confuted, when we conſider how evident it is that the Motions and Influences of the Heavens are all deſigned for the uſe and benefit of Mankind, and the good of all ſublunary things, and are ſtill guided with a conſtant and ſuitable tendency therunto. Now, how unreaſonable is it to ſuppoſe, That God ſhould provide and diſpoſe means in order to an end, and yet have no regard to the end it ſelf! That God ſhould govern the Heavens in order to the good of this lower world, and yet be no way at all concerned about it! And that man (for whoſe ſake chiefly

chiefly all things above, as well as below appear to be made and disposed) should be less regarded then those things made subservient to his use!

Others have Imagined that Providence is exercised about Universals, but not about Singulars; that God takes care of Generals, but nor of particulars. This *Justin Mart.* in his discourse with *Tryphon*, tells him, was the opinion of some Philosophers in *Græce*. Saith he, *Illi etiam nobis persuadere moliuntur Universitatis quidem hujus ac generum specierumq; ipsarum curam gerere Deum, mei autem, atque tui & unius cujusq; singillatim non itidem.* They will needs perswade us that God hath a general care of the whole, but not a distinct care of you, and I, and of every particular part. The vanity of which will soon appear, if we consent to this undeniable truth, that all generals result out of particulars, and consist of them. The Species of Mankind subsists in the Individuals and Particulars, comprehended under it: And therefore God cannot be said to take care of Mankind, nor his Providence to extend to it in general, unless it do so in particulars, and his care reach to every Individual man. Abstract the Genus of any sort of Creatures from the Species and particulars, of which it necessarily consists, and 'tis nothing

nothing. When we place Providence ſo upon Generals, as to abſtract it from particulars, we make it a nullity; nor can there be Providence exerciſed over Generals, without a diſtinct care of particulars; becauſe thoſe generals do neceſſarily include each particular. This is excellently proved by *Plato* in his diſcourſe *de Legib.* That the whole of nothing can ſubſiſt, without a diſtinct care of all the particular parts, and therefore infers; 'tis no way fit to be credited, τὸν θεὸν ὄντα σοφώτατον βουλόμενον τι ἐπιμελεῖσθαι καὶ δυνάμενον ὧν μὴ ῥᾳδίως ἐπιμελεῖσθαι σμικρῶν ὄντων μηδαμῇ ἐπιμελεῖσθαι καθάπερ ἀργὸν ἢ δειλὸν εἶναι πόνους ῥᾳθυμοῦντα τὰ τῶν μεγάλων, *that God who is ſo wiſe and excellent a Being, ſhould neglect to preſide over any part of the World, and not take an univerſal care of the whole*; and *Cicero* in his firſt Book *de Divinatione*, upon the ſame ground concludes thus, *Deorum Providentia Mundus adminiſtratur, iidemque conſulunt rebus Humanis, neque ſolum univerſis, verum etiam ſingulis. The Gods govern the World, and take care of humane affairs, and not only of univerſals, but alſo of ſingulars.*

A third ſort there have been, that will have Divine Providence reach no farther then Men that ſay, 'tis converſant, *circa Homines, non circa Beſtias*, that God deſcends not to

to the care of other Creatures beneath man, nor busies himself with those inferiour parts of the world. This Doctrine seems to have been first set on foot by some of the *Jews*, from whom 'tis probable *Pythagoras* learnt it, and became the teacher of it in *Græce*; for so we find it in *Hierocles*. And it has been too much countenanced since by St. *Jerome*, in in his Exposition of the Prophesie of *Habakkuk*.

That God by his Providence, after a various manner, Rules over the several parts of the world, and guids and disposes them according to the Nature of their Beings, and that proper end to which he first designed them, is not to be denied. But that any parts of the world (those beings beneath the nature of Man) are not under the conduct of Providence, is a position evidently untrue; for if we consider Providence as it relates to preservation, the intire Fabrick of the world, in the whole of it, cannot be continued without a preservation of every part. If we consider Providence as it relates to Rule and Dominion, there can be nothing more plain, then that all Irrational Creatures are so under the Sovereignty and Dominion of Providence; because they are all guided in whatsoever they do to some particular end, and all in general to one common

end,

End. Now to move or act towards some end, is the peculiar property of an intelligent Being. And therefore when we see Creatures void of Intelligence, constantly and regularly moving and acting toward some end, and all to a common end: 'Tis plain they are guided by some superiour Intelligence that has a supreme conduct of their Being; which can be no other then that we call God in his Providence.

But the grand and total subverter of the Doctrine of Providence is *Epicurus*, with *Lucretius*, *Pliny*, and others that have in this point embraced his sentiments. They wholly deny all Providence whatsoever: Suppose it a thing beneath the supreme Being to take any notice of humane affairs; Imagine the world wholy left to it self, and that God is retired above, having not the least imployment himself, nor at all regarding what others do.

To what just contempt, and to how palpable a confutation *Epicurus* and his followers, and all deniers of Providence, expose themselves by the vanity and folly of such an opinion, will, with great ease, be made to appear to every impartial understanding. If God exercise no Dominion over the world, nor take any care of its preservation, if there

be no such thing as Providence in either kind
it must either be because he cannot, or be
cause he will not. To say the first, is to de
ny what men say before, when they admi
(which the *Epicureans* do) the existence of a
Infinite Being. 'Tis a gross contradiction t
say God cannot rule the world, and yet to sa
he is Infinite. (And 'tis plain, Infiniteness
inseperably annexed to his Being) If there
be such a being that was before all, and infi-
nitely above all, there can be no reasonable
doubt of his power and ability, to rule and
command all, and where ever his making and
first framing of all is acknowledged there can-
not be any; for there can be no subjection in
it self so natural and so necessary as in what is
made, to him that made it; nor any Domini-
on so absolute or so certain as in the first fra-
mer of all things. To say that God cannot
Rule the world, is, in effect, to say, there is no
God that made the world: for the admission
of the one, naturally infers the possibility of
the other. 'Tis much easier to suppose Gods
Dominion over it now, then his Creation of
it at first; and he that denyes a possibility of
the former, can upon no good ground sup-
pose the latter. Secondly, to say that God
will not, that is, though he could Rule and order
the world, yet out of choise he refuseth do it,

and

and hath designedly withdrawn him self from all the concerns of it, is an affirmation highly unreasonable; and that upon many accounts. First, This is plainly to suppose (if we admit Creation) that God made the world to no purpose at all, beyond its bare existence, and without any designed end to himself by it, future to its simple Being: for Providence is nothing but the preserving and guiding of all things existing, to a common end. 'Tis to suppose a world capable of many noble and excellent ends, when made, without proposing any end at all to himself by it. The meanest Composers in the smallest matters are never guilty of such an absurdity! 'Twere strange to Imagine the highest Wisdom, and the perfection of it should (in that act of making the World) fall beneath the exercise of every common discretion. No man attempts any thing without a prospect of some end: If God have layed by all thoughts of the world, and concerns himself no more about it then as if no such thing as the World were at all in being (which by the *Epicurean* Doctrine he does) What end can we conceive God to have in the first making of it? Nay, 'tis not only unreasonable to suppose that God infinitely wise, should make the World without proposing any end, but without proposing the

highest and utmost end to himself the Work is capable of. If any man say, that God in making the World, had no other end but the making of it, and that the bare act of making it was his end; he sayes that which is extreamly absurd, and that upon these two Grounds. First, The bare act of Gods making the World could never be his end; because the World it self, when made, barely considered, its only as made, and in its simple existence could not be his end; and if so, then the act of making it could not be his end, because all the rational End of making must lie in the Thing made. Whoever makes, without respect to the thing made by him, makes without respect to the true End of making, which cannot be supposed of the workmanship of God. Now; that the simple being of the World (abstractedly considered from all use and exercise of it) could not be Gods only end when he first made it, is evident from hence, that no being, *quâ* a being, can be Gods ultimate end but his own being. All other created beings contain Gods end in their existency, as they relate in that existency to a dependance upon him, a subserviency and subjection to him: Not simply as they are beings, seperately considered from the dependency and use of their beings. And therefore, in the denial of Providence,

vidence, and Gods being any way concern'd in humane affairs, the *Epicuræans* will be forced to confeſs God made the World without propoſing any End at all to himſelf by it, unleſs it were its bare exiſtence, which ſeperate from a ſubordination to him, and a dependance upon him (all which purely relate to the notion of Providence) is impoſſible to be his end in any being but his own. Secondly, all ſuch as ſay God had no end in making the World but the making of it, muſt needs upon their own ſuppoſition acknowledge, that end ceaſed when the World was once made. And then we muſt Imagine, God, by his Wiſdom and Power to frame ſuch a ſtructure as this world is, and yet deſign it to no uſe nor end at all, when it ſhould be exiſting, and that ſo great variety of ſuch excellent beings, capable of ſuch noble Ends, ſhould be made by him, with ſuch a capacity, without any farther determination or future deſign about them; and that God has continued this World, or at leaſt ſuffered it to continue, ever ſince it was firſt exiſting, without any regard at all to it, or any end deſigned to himſelf by it, all which is moſt ridiculous to conceive, that infinite Wiſdom and power ſhould ſtand by, and have nò ſhare at all in ſuch an affair as the continual revolution of this World.

Secondly, By saying that God refuseth either to govern or care for the World, that (being blessed and happy in himself) he looks no farther than the enjoyment of his own blessedness within himself; we deny the necessary effects and emanations of that goodness which we must needs ascribe to him. 'Tis a true and a general Axiome of all subordinate good (and much more of the higheſt good) *Bonum est sui Diffusivum*, that's comprehended in its Definition. Who can believe that infinite goodness should not delight in communicating good? and should deny to care for others? This principle lies secured in every worthy Breast here below, and shall we shut it out of Heaven? shall we believe God to be of a contrary Nature to what we our selves think best? that were highly to divorce our selves from the notion of him as our Creator; can any man reasonably believe it consisting with Gods goodness to make a World that he knew would be subject to so much trouble and sorrow as this is, and resolve to be no way concern'd about it? What impotency and want does this World give us a prospect of? whether does it naturally tend for supply, but to infinite goodness? T'were a most high indignity offered to the Divine bounty to suppose God so to withdraw himself; and

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'Tis no leſs a wrong done to mankind, to exclude them from the Rule and protection of ſuch a being as that we aſcribe to God, wherein they muſt needs be moſt happy and beſt ſecured. 'Tis to forbid the moſt neceſſary actings of the ſupreme being, and deny to our ſelves the greateſt comfort of our own beings. VVe ſee in all things created a natural care to preſerve their off-ſpring, and a conſtant overſight of what Nature has charg'd them withall; And from whence ſhould this excellent *genius*, both in rational and irrational creatures, be derived, but from the firſt framer and compoſer of all things? And can we ſuppoſe *leſs* in *Him* then he hath given to *us*? Can we, with any good reaſon, put that upon God which would be the greateſt reproch to our ſelves? VVhich is, not to take care of what belongs to us, and what we are but the Secondary Authors of? VVhen we ſee every Creature, by the Law of its being, obliged to the care of its proper and peculiar part, 'twere a moſt unworthy and unnatural conception to think the great God did not take care of the whole.

Thirdly, In denying Providence, we deny the neceſſary effects of the higheſt Juſtice: nay, of any Juſtice. Indeed, we charge perfect Juſtice with the greateſt Injuſtice. Were

it not so, if God should refuse to punnish the vile practices of men toward himself and toward each other? To suffer them to blaspheme Him in Heaven, and to commit all outrages upon Earth, and take nō notice at all of it? When, by the infinity of his knowledge, he cannot be ignorant of it, and by the infinity of his power, he cannot be unable to punish it? And were it not high Injustice, should we suppose no reward for the Righteous, nor regard of them? Nor any recompence for all the Virtuous Religious actions we see performed amongst Mankind? Who is able so unworthily to conceive of God? What madness is it to acknowledge the perfection of all those excellent Attributes we can conceive off to be in God, and yet suppose an exercise of them beneath what we find amongst Men! To deny that to Him which we dayly experience and applaud in every virtuous and good Man! What good Man, in Authority, would refuse to punish an offender, or reward a Worthy action? And yet, if we believe *Epicurus*, we must imagine God to sit still in Heaven, and take no notice at all either of that Good or Evil which is dayly practiced amongst Mankind. This Doctrine of *Epicurus* does, in trueth, transform the notion of God into a meer Idol.

'Tis

'Tis in effect to say God has eyes, but sees not: He has Hands, but works not: He is in Heaven, able to do what he will, but his will is to do just nothing. God, as he is the Supreme Maker of all, so he is thereby necessarily the Supreme Lord and Ruler over all. The right of Supreme Magistracy is inseperable to his being, as containing the highest Power and Authority both Legislative and Executive. All Dominion, whether Natural or Political, is derived from him as the Head of it, and He himself is the Supreme Magistrate over the whole, and can no otherwise stand related to the World. We can no other way rightly conceive of Gods Power and Authority but as Magistratical, nor look upon him in any other notion then as our chief and supreme Ruler; and so are to take no measure of His proceedings from the actings of private persons, but are to suppose God so to deal with the World as the supreme dispenser of Justice, and placed in the highest Seat of Magistratical Authority. And if this be true (as most demonstrably 'tis so) how contrary is *Epicurus* his Doctrine to a right apprehension of God! and how inconsistent with it! How inseperably is providence annexed to all true Conceptions of him! And what a poor account does *Epicurus* give us of God

God without it? What a Magistrate does h
render the most supreme Magistrate? O
that neither *relieves* the *oppressed*, *punish*
the *guilty*, *rewards* the *well-doer*, nor indee
takes any notice of what his Subjects eith
do or say. 'Tis in short, impossible to sepa
rate supreme Magistracy from God; His be
ing supposeth it; 'tis evidently proved virtu
ally and essentially to belong to him, from a
induction of all particulars relative to it
And if so, 'tis extreamly unreasonable no
to suppose from his hand, the most comple
and perfect exercise of all Magistratical Au
thority that we are any way able to conceiv
of.

Fourthly, To suppose that God declines the exercise of all Empire and Rule over the world, is to suppose him to decline the most essential property of his own being, and the noblest exercise of any being. First, the most essential property of his own being. 'Tis as essential to God to Rule as to Be. Gods existence, we say, is a necessary existence; He cannot but be; which implies a necessary superiority. That which cannot but *be*, cannot but be above all. For, whatever has a power superior to it, has a possibility not to *be*. And that which cannot but be *above* all, cannot but Rule *over* all. Because, the

the very *being* of ſuperiority lies in the exerciſe of *Dominion*, and cannot be upheld without it. To fancy the *exiſtence* of infinite Power without *exerciſe*, is to frame an *Idol* in our own imaginations, and to fancy what is in it ſelf impoſſible to be. Infinite Power to Rule, implies infinite Actual Rule. We can never ſeparate between infinite *Power* and infinite *Dominion*. The being of the one neceſſarily implies the other. Whatever is in God is actually in him. God has not only virtually an infinite power, but an infinite power in Act. Infinite power muſt needs be in continual Act, and cannot be otherwiſe, becauſe Infinite. And therefore all things muſt needs be in ſubjection to it. We are ſo to conceive of all Gods Attributes as things not only in *Potentia*, but in *Facto eſſe*. Gods infinite Wiſdom is not onely an *ability* to be wiſe, but an infinite *Act* and *Exertion* of wiſdome. So his infinite *knowledg* is not only an infinite *capacity* of knowing, and *ability* to know, but an infinite actual knowledge of all things, excluding an *ignorance* of *any thing*. 'Twere to annex imperfection to Gods Attributes to ſay, they are not in *exerciſe*; *Power*, in its *exerciſe*, implies *Dominion*. 'Tis from *defect* where 'tis not ſo *exerted*. And therefore, from infinite *Power* in which there can be

no

no *defect*, must needs arise infinite *Dominion*. 'Twas a childish conceit of *Epicurus* to think that infinite Power could be *set by*, and not be in continual *operation*, or that any thing could move, act, or exist, without a necessary subjection to infinite Power. Should the world rule it self, and be under no subjection, God's Power would cease to be, what it can never but be, which is, infinite in its Supremacy. Should any one thing be done in the World and not come under the exercise of Gods supreme and Sovereign Rule, his Power would cease to be Infinite, because not *actually* above all: Which it can never be unless it *actually* *Rule* over all.

Besides, Were it a supposition capable of admission, or such a thing as could pretend to a possibility, that infinite power could be *set by*, and *exist* without *exercise*, who could embrace so gross an absurdity as to believe that God should thus determine with himself, that the best *use* that could be made of infinite Power, were, to make *no use at all* of it! And so, having at first made the World by his wisdome and Power, should leave it perfectly to its own *Chanceable* revolutions, without any farther effect or communication of either.

Secondly,

Secondly, We ſuppoſe God (in declining the Rule of the World) to decline the neleſt exerciſe of *any* being. VVe can think of nothing more excellent then *Rule* and *Dominion* to imploy the largeſt mind, and diſpenſe the compleateſt virtues. And is itreaſonable to diveſt the higheſt Power of it? To *have* Power, and to *uſe* it for the good of others, is that we moſt applaud amongſt men. Thoſe beſt faculties we have (by which we can only conceive of Gods excellent nature) their *Perfection* lies in *Communication*. He that Rules *well*, does the *beſt* thing we can frame an *idaa* of. And therefore the Rule of the VVorld is the moſt excellent thing we can aſcribe to God. *Cicero*, in his 2 Book *De Nat. Deor.* ſpeaks fully to this. *Nihil eſt* (ſays he) *præclarius mundi adminiſtratione Deorum, Igitur Conſilio adminiſtratur mundus: Nihil eſt præſtantius Deo; Ab eo igitur neceſſe eſt mundum regi.* Thoſe of the beſt endowments we think the fitteſt for Empire. And the more *excellent* any ſoul is, the more enlarged and vigorous in *action* it is. And ſhall we ſuppoſe God not to Rule in Heaven? Shall we think him very vain that ſhould tell us? VVe then make the beſt *Uſe* of all humane abilities, when we *leaſt imploy* them! Becauſe the great and natural end of all *ability* for

for action, is action: And yet shall we suppose that God layes by the exercise of all his Infinite attributes, and wholly retires himself in Heaven? Who is able (without assaulting his own Reason) to admit such conception of that excellent being we ascribe to God and father that upon him which would make up the Character of a very ill man.

But to render the absurdity of this Doctrine more evident to every impartial man, let me ask the *Epicureans* this question; If God doth not rule the World, and that darling Axiome of *Epicurus* be true, that *Quod eternum beatumque sit nec habere ipsum negotii quid quam, nec exhibere alteri.* How comes God to give Laws to the World? to admit the one, and still to affirm the other were ridiculous; for they are inseperable *Relatives.* All Laws necessarily relate to *Rule* and *Dominion* on the one hand, and *obedience* and *subjection* on the other hand. That God has planted a natural Law in every mans *Being*, relating to his own *Superiority* and mans *Subjection*, is in truth past all rational denial. Whence comes that inherent distinction of good and evil every man is born with? and which nothing humane can either alter or abrogate? but with reference to Gods authority over him? What is that we call Conscience in every man, but

Gods

Gods vicegerent here below, and the Vicar-general of his ſupreme Rule over the World? *Epicurus* perceiving that if he once admitted any ſuch thing as that we call the Law of Nature, or an inherent diſtinction of good and evil in Men, Providence (from thence) would neceſſarily be implied, poſitively denyes it; ſaying there is no ſuch thing as the Law of Nature, nor any thing of that kind; and maintains this Hypotheſis, that there is nothing in the naked Eſſence of things that diſcriminates them; but that all difference of things comes from Cuſtom and Poſitive Law. Firſt, I muſt needs ſay that *Epicurus* by this Doctrine, renders himſelf unworthy of all debate and diſcourſe, becauſe he denies common experience, and what every man may know to be true from his own breaſt, without farther information. And there needs no other demonſtration then an appeal to all impartial Reaſon in the Caſe. *Ariſtotle* ſayes (and upon good grounds) that no diſpute ought to be admitted againſt experience; becauſe, if I once bring that into queſtion I diſclaim all ground of certainty. And therefore amongſt all wiſe men, things of common experience are ſtill excluded and ſet aſide from all debate and diſpute. How great ſtreſs ſoever the *Epicureans* lay upon this Principle (and they lay very

very great upon it) both from the Reason of a L
things in themselves considered, and from ver
common experience, 'tis proved to be equal t w
ly false and pernitious. The Law of Natur as
I call *the dictates of right Reason, shewing goo* nt
or evil to be in some things by their agreement d al
disagreement with the rational Nature, and at i
consequently, to be commanded and forbidden b n
the Author of Nature, God himself. The truth n e
of this definition will appear very evident un
for first, a *Natural Law* must needs be seated nt
in the *Rational faculty*, as being the *superior* rig
part of man. Nothing can truly or properly h
be said to be a Rule or a Law to a Rational mi
Being, arising from it self, but the genuine m
dictates of Reason. Secondly, whatsoever nsic
my Reason tells me is in it self good (by its m
agreement to that judgment my Reason makes nal
of what is so) I must needs think that agree- nsic
able to the Nature of God, and must needs son
think my self under obligation to it from God. ult
Under obligation to it I must be, because of G
mine own judgment about it; and that Judg- nies
ment must needs oblige me as a Law given to rat
me from God; because 'twas he made me with ma
a faculty so judging, and is in truth himself w
the author of this Judgment by creating the effe
faculty that necessarily makes it. Whatever th
Judgment God makes a man with, must needs the
be

a Law from God given to him, and he can ver depart from it without offending him t was the Author of it, and placed it within n as a Rule of his Being. Whatever judgnt God made me with, concerning my ſelf l all other things, is his Judgment: And at is Gods Judgment is a Law to me, and I never *oppoſe* it without *ſin*, being in mine n exiſtence, made with a neceſſary ſubjectiunto him. Now I ſay, that by the Judgnt of the Rational faculty, and the dictates right Reaſon, Mankind neceſſarily make h a *diſtinction* of things; that is, they demine ſome actions and ſome things to be in mſelves intrinſically good, and others inſically evil, from the Nature of the things mſelves, as they ſtand related to the Ranal Judgment, abſtracted from all collateral ſiderations whatever. And there is no ſon to be given of that, more then of the ulty of Reaſon it ſelf, that Man is created God with a faculty ſo judging. He that nies the being of this natural Law, muſt obrate the judgment of Reaſon, by which eve man becomes a neceſſary and unrepealable w to himſelt in his opinion of things: 'Tis effect to deny a man to be *Rational*, to make things alike to him, as to the good or evil them; becauſe the faculty we call Reaſon

exists in every man with such an innate distinction. No man (using his Reason) can think falshood and truth equally good in themselves, Justice and injustice, Mercy and Cruelty distinguished by the fundamental constitution of our beings, and can never be equal competitors to a Rational approbation. A man may well say, that the determinations that men make upon the plainest demonstrations depend not upon the intrinsick certainty of the Rational faculty, as to say, their determinations about good and evil do not so. For the one lie, every jot, as connate to the Judgment of the Rational faculty as the other. A corrupt vicious man has the Judgment of all unbiassed Reason against him, as much as a false conclusion in Mathematicks: And a Virtuous man for him, as much as the most evident demonstrable Truth. No man (of untainted intellectuals) can equally esteem a Religious *Socrates*, and a profane *Caligula*, and a sensual *Sardanapalus*, and a virtuous *Cato*. Many things appear to us in themselves intrinsically good, and so oblige us from the dictates of Reason, and those primary statutes of Nature, and no positive Law can alter or supersede the Obligation. That Children should obey their Parents, and not Parents the Children, has no indifferency in it; nor can

e Obligation be removed or inverted by any uſtom or poſitive Law, that the Deity ould be venerated is a Statute of Nature. *picurus* himſelf confeſſeth *we are to venerate e Deity for its excellency.* But upon what ound I would know? If upon the ground our natural light, and an Obligation ariſing om the innate dictates of Reaſon, he muſt en admit the Laws of Nature; and, by ſo ing, 'tis certain he deſtroys his own Doine, and will be forced to acknowledge a ovidence. If barely upon poſitive Law, falls under this horrible abſurdity, to make at the pleaſure of *Men* (for ſo are all things at depend meerly upon poſitive Law) whe-er the Deity ſhall be ſo venerated or no. the being of a Deity, and the excellency of ch a being, be eſtabliſhed by natural light, m ſure the *Veneration* of him is ſo too; and it be not ſo eſtabliſhed, but made to be in-fferent to believe whether there be ſuch be-g or no, Men may then by their own plea-re make and unmake their Gods, as they their Pictures and Statues. When we are ld we muſt venerate the Deity for its excel-ncy, we are told that which is true; but as *picurus* did circumſtantiate this Doctrine, was not like to produce much Religion; for, the ſame time, he denies the being of all na-

tural Laws, and makes all things in the
selves, indifferent, and also denies all Pro
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by which all rewards and punishments are e
cluded; so that the *Epicurean* Religion is
the very foundation of it wholly Precario
and depends upon the pleasure of men, or e
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To say the Deity must be venerated, and
the same time to say that all actions and thin
are in themselves indifferent is plainly to s
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that a man may practise any thing, the ve
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to forbid them) and yet be a Religious ven
rator of the Deity; the admission of whi
is lothsome to all Mankind. To say tha
Man must venerate the Deity, and yet to a
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nishment to the not doing of it, here nor her
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fter, is to prepare men to be Religious by elling them before hand, if they be ſo, it hall be no whit the better for them, and if hey be not ſo, it ſhall not be one jot the orſe. This notion of *Epicurus* (which yet the whole of his Divinity) ſo circumſtanated, ſeems to me ſo weak an attempt toard any thing of Religion, that I rather hink of him as *Cicero* does, *That he was a an perfectly without any Religion, and had no elief of a Deity at all.* For ſo ſays he of im, in the end of his firſt Book *De Nat. De-. Verius eſt igitur illud nimirum quod familia-is omnium noſtrum Poſidonius diſſeruit. In ibro quinto De natura Deorum. Nullos eſſe Deos Epicuro videri: quæq; is de Diis immortali-us dixerit invidiæ deteſtandæ gratia dixiſſe.*

Two things (of which the whole world, n all ages, have had experience) do evident-y diſcover the falſhood of this poſition, that l things are in themſelves alike to mankind, ll cuſtome and poſitive Law make a differ-nce. Firſt, VVe find men paſſing a judg-ent upon themſelves in the Cloſet of their wn *breaſts*, accuſing and excuſing themſelves bout matters no way connizable and no way etermined by any poſitive Law, but meerly uided herein by the unavoidable evidence hat their own Reaſon gives in concerning the

good or evil of things. In all times and age this Truth hath been established. For as *Cicero* says truely, *Time wears out errours of opinion, but confirmes all Natural truths.* Every mans own reason carryes an innate condemnation in it to some things as evil, and an approbation of others as good, and this no way founded in Customes or Laws of times or places, but in the very faculty of Reason it self and is neither Created nor can be Abrogated by any thing humane. For, as *Philo* says well, *Lex mentiri nescia est recta ratio, quæ Lex non ab hoc aut ab illo mortali mortalis, nec in Chartis aut Columnis exanimis exanima, sed corrumpi nescia, quippe ab immortali natura insculpta in immortali intellectu.* If there were no Laws but positive, and what had their rise among men, were men under no obligation to the natural Light of their own beings. How can we conceive rational creatures to make a Conscience to themselves about things no way determined by any such positive Laws? What mens Laws reach not, no man can be reasonably thought to be concern'd in Conscience about, if there be no Superiour Law of God; becaufe, where there is no Law there can be no offence, and so no foundation of Guilt. Nor is it conceivable that custom can be the foundation of such *Conscience* in men,

men, and of that different *Judgment* they make to themſelves of things, from whence that Conſcience ariſeth; becauſe the principle upon which men go in theſe natural determinations are *generally* the *ſame* and agreed to by *all*. And 'tis highly unreaſonable to ſuppoſe the whole World ſhould every where agree in a cuſtome of judging things to be otherwiſe then indeed they be, and ſubject themſelves in their own breaſts to ſuch an eroneous Judgment, and that the conſtant determination of the publick reaſon of the world, that ſome things are in themſelves good and others are in themſelves evil, was at firſt founded in a miſtake, and that that miſtake became cuſtomary and univerſal. This is a thing that carries the utmoſt of improbability in it, and is in effect, to ſay *mankind* is not *reaſonable*, and to put the *Fool* upon the whole World. Beſides, the determinations of our Reaſon about the good or evil of things, are at the preſent juſtified to us to be pure, and abſtracted from all byas, either from cuſtome or from poſitive Laws, from the nature of the things themſelves and the moſt genuine judgment of Reaſon it ſelf in its judging of them. And he that will ſay that we are no way certain but that our beſt judgment about good and evil may be, for ought we know, grounded upon

custome & so mistaken, may as well say that a other judgment is so too: And so in effect say we are no way sure but that all the reason of th world's nothing else but a *great customary mistak*

Secondly, There are natural Laws, by whic things are in themselves differenced, prove to be *previous* to all positive Laws; Becaus all positive Laws appear plainly to have thei rise from those primary Laws of Nature, an to suppose them. The common principles o Natures Laws have been the common princi ples of all positive Laws every where. How different soever positive Laws have been a mongst themselves in other things, yet th Grand Maxims of Nature founded upon tha innate distinction of good and evil men are born withall have been universally admitted by all *Legislators*. General effects, we say, must have general causes. And that general consent we find in all positive Laws to such natural Maxims, does evidently declare such Maximes to be the Universal sentiments of mankind, and those original Laws annexed to the beings of men in their first frame and constitution, by which things in themselves are primarily discriminated antecedently to all positive Laws, and from whence all positive Laws have their subsequent rise.

Should this *Epicurean* doctrine be admitted,

That

That all things are originally and in their own nature alike, till differenced by positive Law or Custome, three things would evidently result from it; The first ruinous to all policy, The second to all Religion, And the third destructive to both. First, No Man that thought all things originally indifferent, and the whole world and all the actions of it, as to good or evil, to be *Rasa tabula*, could ever be obliged farther then *force* or his own *interest* prevailed upon him. For if all things be originally in themselves indifferent, and have neither good nor ill in them, 'twas then indifferent whether there should be any *Lawmakers*, or any *Laws made*. Authority it self is indifferent; and if that be it self indifferent, and have neither intrinsecal good nor evil in it, my *obedience* must needs be indifferent too. For if it be indifferent whether there should be any such thing as civil authority, or no, and civil Authority have no real internal good or ill annexed to it, it must needs be indifferent (as to matter of inward Conscience) whether I should obey it or no. If all things be in themselves indifferent, 'tis impossible for men, by positive Laws, to make any thing otherwise; because the power by which those positive Laws are made, is, in its nature, indifferent too, and has neither essential good

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nor ill belonging to it. And if so, it must needs be indifferent to me, whether I obey it or not. For, the things they command or forbid are, in their own nature, indifferent, and the power commanding is, it self, indifferent, as to its own Being, whether it should so command or no! For although a thing in it self and all its circumstances wholly indifferent ceaseth to be so to me, when commanded or forbid by a positive Law, because of the conscience I ought to have of the authority commanding or forbidding, as having an intrinsical good in it, to which I am positively obliged, and as a thing in its own nature obligatory to me, yet, were that Authority wholly indifferent in it self, in its being, whether it should be or no, and had no essential good or ill in its constitution, it must needs be indifferent to me whether I should obey it or not! There can never be any good or ill in obedience or disobedience, where there is a perfect indifferency in the being of that Power that requires it. Secondly, If all things were, to mankind, in themselves alike and indifferent, and there were no such original distinction of good and evil made in the rational nature, 'twere impossible ever to frame any amiable or excellent *Idea* of God. 'Twere all one whatever we thought of him; We might as well think him *cruel* and *unjust*,

as

as *merciful* and *juſt*. For, we have no other way to frame an *Idea* of God, but from that diſtinction of good and evil we make in our own breaſts. When the *Epicureans* tell us *We muſt venerate the Deity for its excellency*, What excellency is it we can aſcribe to God? and from whence can we derive the notion of any ſuch thing? If, to our own reaſons, all things are alike, and there is no innate diſtinction of good and evil in the rational nature, this maxime of the *Epicureans* does, in truth, put a total end to all well-doing, and to all well-thinking, and does utterly extinguiſh all Religion amongſt Mankind. The Nobleſt and beſt ground of all Religion is good thoughts of God, ariſing from an amiable apprehenſion of him in our minds. Without this, 'tis impoſſible to be truely Religious. And this is utterly impoſſible ever to be made, (but upon groſs Deluſion and miſtake) if no one thing be, in the true judgment of men, better then another, but all things, as to their good and evil in themſelves, equal and indifferent. 'Tis that diſtinction founded in the rational nature between good and bad, and an ability ariſing from thence to frame to it ſelf an *Idea* of excellency and perfection, that is the ground of all right conceptions of God. And indeed, by finding things diſtinguiſhed

guished in our own rational nature, we come to know they are eternally distinguished in Gods Nature: Because he himself is the Author of our rational nature. And 'tis not reasonable to conceive he should create a nature contrary to his own. And so we know there is not only a Reason in our own Breasts why some things are good, and some things are evil, but there is an eternal Reason in the nature of God why they are so! What I think good, I must necessarily think agreeable to God. And what I think evil, I must needs judge *contrary* to him; or else I do not answer the original notion my reason gives me of his being. And so, by the distinction I find made of things in mine own rational Nature, I come to know there is the same Eternal distinstinction in Gods Nature, and so an unalterable Obligation arising from thence; because my Reason tells me, Gods nature must be agreeable to what I think most excellent by the judgment of that faculty God has made me withall. And of this I am as well assured as I am of Gods being; for the same faculty that tells me God *Is*, tells me also his Nature must needs be agreeable to what my reason tells me is in it self Holy and Good, and directly opposite to whatever it tells me is in it self Evil. Thirdly, were it Custom and Positive Laws that

that did only constitute the difference of Actions and Things, that difference must needs be regulated thereby. And 'twill then unavoidably follow that Custom and Positive Laws might possibly invert the whole frame of things, and that universal opinion of Good and Evil the World is now possessed with; that is, *Honesty*, *Truth* and *Virtue* might come to be in the place of *Wickedness*, *Falshood* and *Vice*. And those we now think the *Best* Actions, reckoned the *Worst*, and the *Worst* adjudged to be the *Best*. The very mention whereof would be as *Nauseous*, as the practise of it would prove *Ruinous* to humane Nature. And every man carries about him, in his own Reason such an innate abhorrency of it as renders it utterly impossible, upon any terms, ever to be.

It would be also a task too hard for the wisest *Epicurean* to give any rational account how the World (without a Divine disposal, and the admission of Providence) should be continued in that orderly frame we see it! never any such thing as the order of the world fell out by *chance*. 'Twere absurd to suppose it, how all things (even some contrary to their own Nature and proper tendency) should be made so *subservient* as they are to a common end. 'Tis not possible for a rational Eye

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to view over the general *Oeconomy* of the world, arising from the regular motion of each particular, and exclude the influence of Divine Wisdom from it. If we look *up*, of how admirable consideration is the constant course of the Heavens, and the suitable influences of the Heavenly Bodies to the good of things here below! though the motion by the Equator only had been more simple and direct, yet we see they have also an *Oblique* motion, whereby, with more variety, they dispence their favours to the World. The motions of the Stars *Eccentrick* and *Epiciclike*, as the best observers of them find, not only declare the virtue of their own Materials, but plainly point to us the regulation of a superior Agent; which seeing how far they are from the reach of all humane power, can be no other but the Divine Being. If we look downward, we find the Sea and the Waters a standing Monument of Providence. The Sea kept within Bounds, and not suffered to exceed them, restrained from the natural tendency of its own Being; which 'tis plain no humane power could effect. *Aristotle* in his Book of *Wonders*, owns himself a *Convert* to Providence, upon the single consideration that the Land was not drowned in the Waters, and the Earth overwhelmed with the Sea, which

which without a Divine Power must needs be. *Strabo* observes the same necessity of Providence from the position of the Waters, which (sayes he) if you respect only their Quality, and suppose them left to themselves, must needs take place between the Earth and the Air, when as now we behold them confined to one proper Chanel, and interfused in the Earth, so far as to make it more fruitful and useful, nay, we find the Water as *Grotius* observes in subserviency to the good of the whole against its own Nature, sometimes moving upwards, being so composed as to sustain it self in such motion, by a continued *Cohæsion* of parts. Whereſoever we cast our Eyes, the whole of the World, in all the parts of it, does evidently own it self to the manage and conduct of a wise and excellent Providence, all things moving towards particular Ends, and all those particular Ends issuing themselves into one Common End. To move to an End is the plain effect of an Intelligent Being; And therefore, when we see Creatures without intelligence still moving both to particular and general Ends, 'tis plain they are directed by some intelligence. And we see Creatures Rational, and that have Intelligence moving and acting to Ends superiour to their own intelligence, and which them-

themselves knew not of nor intended, and yet their actings and motions towards them regular; 'tis plain they are conducted by a higher Intelligence. And this in both cases, can be no other but the *highest Intelligence*, who at once comprehends *all Ends* and *all Means* tending to those Ends; which is God himself.

'Tis likewise an irrefragable proof of Providence, that many things have come to pass in this World that have been evidently *supernatural*, and beyond all humane ability to effect; which could never have been, if God be so withdrawn from the World as to be no way an actor in it. What will the *Epicureans* say to all the *Miracles* that have at any time been wrought? and to such things as have come to pass beyond all product of Nature? to deny the fact of such things, and to say they have not been, is at once to impeach all humane Testimony, and to discard the credit of all History. If we admit them, we must needs confess they are the effect of Gods supreme power, and the evident Works of his hands in a providential way; and if so, we shall soon dispatch with *Epicurus*, and spoil his fictitious retirement of God in the Heavens, and bring down the Divine Majesty to an open converse with Mankind, and indeed undeniably establish

bliſh both his care of, and his ſupreme Rule over this whole World.

Two things there are upon which *Epicurus* at firſt, *Lucretius*, *Pliny*, and all the *Epicureans* ſince, have chiefly juſtified their denial of Providence, and Gods ſupreme Rule over the World. *Firſt*, (ſay they) 'tis a thing beneath the excellent Being of God, for him to concern himſelf with the affairs of this inferiour world, and to take notice of every little paſſage here below; nor can he (as *Pliny* ſayes) be ſuppoſed (without great diſorder to himſelf, and being withdrawn from his own delight and content) to perform the charge *tam multiplicis & triſtis Miniſterij: Of ſo multiplicious and ungrateful a function. Secondly*, (ſay they) the poſture of things in this World is ſuch, good men often ſuffering, and bad men proſpering: wickedneſs ſucceeding, and Virtue miſcarrying; 'tis ſo often *bene malis & male bonis*, that we cannot believe this World to be governed from above, and that all the affairs of it ſhould be under the conduct of ſuch perfect and excellent attributes as thoſe we aſcribe to God.

The firſt is ſoon anſwered, 'Tis an abſurd diminution of infiniteneſs, and inconſiſtent with it, to limit or diſtinguiſh its comprehenſion, God hath an infinite Comprehenſion,

and cannot but know all things together, or else his Knowledge were not infinite. Nor can there be any distinction made in the manner of his comprehension; great things and small things are all alike, and upon even terms, as to his comprehension and Knowledge of them. Nothing can be above him or below him in any such respect: 'Tis foolish to say any thing is too mean for God to take Cognizance of; because an universal Cognizance of all things, past, present, and to come, is included and necessarily implied in the infinity of his Knowledge. So far the mistake is plain and visible; nothing can possibly happen, of which we can say God takes no notice: But supposing all things that come to pass are known to him, yet (say the *Epicureans*) 'tis not fit to conceive, he any way concerns himself about them, or that he will so far trouble or discompose himself, as to undertake the Rule and Regulation of them; which lazy, slothful dream of *Epicurus*, above all his other Hypotheses, has exposed him to the just contempt of all sober and intelligent men; 'tis so gross and unworthy a conception of the Supreme Being, and so great an indignity offered unto him, and most evidently contrary to all those notions that result from the true exercise of our Reasons about him

him, and that will eaſily appear ſeveral ways.

Firſt, I acknowledge there are ſome things God cannot do, God cannot deny himſelf, nor do any thing againſt the Nature of his own Being, That reſults from the perfection of his Being, and is included in the neceſſity of it: But to ſay that whatſoever God can do; that is, can do, as being no way contrary to his Being to do, and ſo has a poſſibility, he may do (I ſpeak not of the bare Imaginary ſuppoſition of what God can do in reſpect of his unlimited power; for ſo we may conceive he may deſtroy the World in a Moment; but his power cannot be actually ſo exerted; that's but a vain fantaſm, unleſs it be correſpondent to his Juſtice, his Mercy, and his other excellent attributes) but to ſay, whatever God can do in ſuch a ſenſe; that is, whatever is not inconſiſtent with his Being to do, and ſo may be done by him, he cannot do without trouble to himſelf, and diſorder to his own excellent Nature, is to deny the eſſentiality of his Being: The inſeperable and eſſential property of Gods Being is perfection. Now if he cannot perfectly act whatever he can act, he is not eſſentiallyperfect, but has a poſſibility of imperfection annexed to his Being. To ſay God could govern this

World if he pleased, 'twere no way contradictory to his Being to do it; but yet if he should do it, it would trouble and discompose him, is to deny his perfection, and plainly admit him capable of imperfection, which is directly opposite to all true notions of his Being; 'tis to suppose, God cannot perfectly do whatever can be done by him, and to suppose perfection not to accompany the utmost possibility of his acting, which is to deny his perfection, and consequently the most inseperable property of his Being. Nor can any man say, the Goverment of this World, in it self considered, can have any contrariety in it to Gods Being; because Goverment in its own Nature must needs be most suitable to his Being, and 'tis the certain way to bring the whole World into perfect conformity to him. And to say, 'tis contrary to his Being; because it would be a trouble to him, is plainly to say, 'tis contrary to his Being; because his Being is *imperfect*.

Secondly, This is to measure out *Infiniteness* (which can have no measure) by *Finiteness*. 'Tis in short, to measure out God to our selves by our *own Line*; and when we acknowledge his Being to be compleat in all Infinite perfections, to measure out the actings of those perfections by our own greatest imper-

perfections; and what can be more vain and leſs reaſonable, then to carry up thoſe diſtinctions we make in our own Actings, to the Actings of God, whom we acknowledge infinite and perfect, when thoſe diſtinctions ariſe, viſibly from our own imperfection in Acting. 'Tis the limited extent of our own Beings that makes us reckon things *above* us, and *below* us; no ſuch diſtinction can be made where there is infiniteneſs of Knowledge, and infiniteneſs of power. All things are under an even conſideration to ſuch infinite Attributes; and 'tis becauſe of our own great imperfections that labour and trouble attends us in what we do: and ſhall we ſuppoſe God capable of that, in the exerting of his infinite and perfect Attributes? 'Twas moſt unlike a Philoſopher to ſay, God would not govern the World, nor take any care of it; becauſe it would trouble him ſo to do. 'Twas plainly in other terms, to utter this contradiction, God, who is infinitely perfect, would not govern the World, becauſe he is imperfect. *Epicurus*, by this Divinity of his, deſerves to be reckoned with ſuch of the profane and fabulous Poets, who uſually aſcribed the *Infirmities* (nay, the *debaucheries*) of the Worſt Men to the Beſt of their Gods, and transferred the higheſt notions they had of their Gods to

very ill men; and amongst such *Cicero* ranks him, and concludes against his Divinity with this very good position. *Nihil est quod Deus efficere non potest, & ullo sine labore.*

Thirdly, If the happiness of the Deity lies in a total retreat to his own perfections, and the concerns of the world would be a trouble to him. If that be a sufficient Reason against all Providence, 'tis much more so against all Creation, and whoever upon that account does with *Epicurus* deny Gods providential Rule and Dominion, is engaged to embrace the whole of his other Doctrines against Creation: for would it trouble and discompose the Deity to Rule the World now, it must needs do so to make it before. If that Reason be good against *Providence* now, 'twas good against *Creation* at first; either God acted against the grand Principle of his own felicity then, or else 'tis consistent with his Providence now. Besides that, 'tis Childish to think God would make any thing too *high* or too *low* for his own *Dominion*; or that he should *Create* a World that would be a trouble to himself to *Govern*: Nor can we imagine that any thing God thought fit at first to make, and be himself the Author of, should ever be unworthy of his *care*, or beneath his *Regulation*. 'Twere to impeach his *wisdom* in

in *making*, or his *Goodneſs* in *not regarding* what himſelf at firſt *produced*. God muſt needs know alſo from everlaſting all the enſuing Conſequences of what he at the firſt made. He ſaw, *uno intuitu*, whatever would happen and come to paſs. And 'tis no way ſuppoſable that God (with ſuch afore-ſight and infinite Comprehenſion of all things) ſhould *make* ſuch a World, the future Effects and Conſequences whereof ſhould be unworthy his *notice*, or unfit for him to *diſpoſe*, or a trouble to him to *regard*. Or indeed, that any thing ſhould ever come to paſs, from what God firſt gave an Exiſtence to, that ſhould not naturally and neceſſarily fall under his *Regulation*, and be moſt ſuitable to his *Dominion*, and the exertion of his own excellent Attributes, and be, at laſt, over-ruled by him to ſome wiſe and excellent End.

The other Objection made againſt Providence, from the *various ſucceſſes* all humane Actions are accompanied with; ſometimes the worſt Actions, and the worſt Men proſpering, and the beſt miſcarrying, is that which the greateſt oppoſers of Providence have ſtill moſt applauded themſelves in. And ſo far it prevailed with ſome *Philoſophers* heretofore, that although they admitted of Pro-

vidence in all *natural* things, supposing they could not be upheld without it, yet they much doubted, if not wholly denyed it, in all things *Moral* and *Political*. 'Tis from hence, no doubt, that the greatest *Atheism* in the world hath arisen. Men have taken occasion from hence not only to dispute the notion of Providence, but to question the *Being* of *God himself*; thinking them (as indeed they are) inseperable Relatives; and not only upon a general consideration of the various and uncertain disposal of things; but Men have also taken up Pikes against Providence and Religion upon *particular* occasions; because their own Interests were not gratified thereby. Hence it was that *Diagoras* first set up for an *Atheist*; because the Gods did not immediately strike a perjured Person dead in the place, as he desired. Hence it was that *Cato* (though a Stoical asserter of Providence before) when he saw the Affairs of the *Roman* State decay under the conduct of *Pompey*, whom he esteemed a Patriot of his Countrey, and wished well to, and beheld *Cæsar* prospering in his attempts to what he thought a tyranny, he falls foul upon Providence, and professed, that he saw a fallacious instability in the Government of the Gods: That *Pompey* was ever succesful when he did

no

no good with his victories, but never prospered when he implied his Armies for the freedom of his Countrey. Hence it was that *Cotta* in *Tully* makes so great an Harangue against Providence. That the two *Scipio's* and so many good Patriots had *miscarried*, and in particular, that his Uncle *Rutilius* was banished, and his friend *Drusus* slain. But setting aside all those particular occasions, and private Interests, upon which men have been driven to a disgust of the notion of Providence, (which yet have been, and still are very many and frequent) The *general* course of the World is visibly such as gives a real Ground to this Objection: And therefore a distinct and particular Answer ought to be given to it.

As God, in making the World has left us undeniable Evidence, that he himself is the Author of it, but yet has left us without an Answer to many questions men may ask about it, and made it very suitable to our reason to think we should be so left, and to suppose a finite capacity not fully able to comprehend the product of Infinite Wisdom and Power, so in his *Rule* over the World we have undeniably Evidence that he does *Rule*; but in the *manner* of his doing it we see many passages that far out-go our comprehension. If any man say,

say, that in Gods first *make* of the World we acquiesce singly in his *Sovereignty*, nor need we go farther therein then the bare act of his Will; but in his *Rule* of the World 'tis not so; there we expect the visible effects of his Justice, suitable to those natural Laws he has given to us, and that capacity of judging between just and unjust, by which we ascend upward, and come to be ascertained, that there is a supreme and perfect Justice in God. I answer, 'tis true that Gods Will was the great Reason, at first, of the *make* of the world; but yet we must look upon his *Will* as the Effect of his *wisdom*, and it cannot be otherwise; God could not *will* to make any thing that would not be *Wisely* made, when it was made, nor can we suppose he should. And yet 'twere as reasonable to deny Gods *make* of the World; because I cannot see the visible Effects of his Wisdom in every part of it, as to deny his *Rule* of the World; because in every passage of it his Justice is not visible to me. All the Philosophers heretofore agreed to this, as a general Truth, that *Nature* produced nothing in vain: And yet never any nor all of them could give a distinct account of the Reason and Use of every particular. If there be sufficient gronnd to assure me, that God made the World in the *general*, 'tis absurd

ſurd to queſtion the Wiſdom or the Reaſon of any Particular. So if there be Evidence ſufficient to eſtabliſh Gods general Providence over the whole, his Juſtice in Particulars is thereby neceſſarily implied. The being of Providence in general is not only proved upon ſuch rational grounds as every unprejudiced man muſt needs acquieſce in, but in many things we are experimentally convinced of the Being of it, from the Effects of it. He that denies the exiſtence of Providence, can admit but of two ways, by which any thing can be ſuppoſed to come to paſs; either from the Moral determinations of Men and their Actings thereupon, or elſe from ſome purely *Natural* Cauſe. Now 'tis evident that many things have and do come to paſs in a viſible judicial way, which have not their riſe from any humane Judgment, nor can, with any good Reaſon, be derived from any natural operation, and can be aſcribed to nothing elſe but Gods ſupreme Judgment. Virtue and Religion have been often rewarded, and wickedneſs brought to a due puniſhment, before Mens Eyes in this World, by ways unthought of and undeſigned by any, and out of the reach of all humane Authority, and in ſuch a manner as no man, impartially judging, can poſſibly imagine to come to

paſs

pass by a meerly casual conjunction of natural Causes, but must needs acknowledge an effect of Divine Justice therein. And of this we are informed by the Records of all Ages; and no one Age passeth without some experience of it.

This objection (how great soever it may seem to be) will be sufficiently removed in every candid opinion, if two things be made appear. First, That there is good ground upon which to establish the belief of a providence in *general*, which hath been proved already. And Secondly, that a satisfactory account may be given how the present course of the world and this providence may very well consist together. And this latter may be done by the consideration of two things; First, our own great Incapacity to judge of the whole of providence, or of very many parts of it. And secondly, the rational supposition of a *Future State*. The first ought to make us cautious not to impeach providence hastily, nor to deny it when we cannot fully comprehend it. The second ought fully and finally to satisfy us in all such cases where we see Gods providence and his justice are not in this world reconcileable. For the first, How reasonable is it to conceive that the ways and methods of God in his providence should not be

be fully grasped by our comprehension, when he is so much above us in those excellent attributes by which they are contrived and brought about. The Rule of the world and the harmony of providence in conducting all things to a *common end*, is an effect of the same infinity by which the world was at first produced. 'Tis unreasonable for us, when God Rules, to expect an exact and perfect Knowledg of all his proceedings. No humane abilities can create a competent Judg of the whole, or of very many particular parts of Gods providential Rule over the World, and that for these three Reasons. First, God knows the *Aims*, *Ends* and *Intentions* of all Men in what they do; he sees the *inside* as well as the *outside* of the whole World, and proceeds according to the compleatness and intire Circumstances of every Action. This we are no way capable of, and so, in many passages of his Providence, no fit Judges of his proceedings. 'Tis a great piece of folly to judg of Conclusions, when we are uncertain of the Premises; and to call in question Gods determinations, when we know not the grounds of them. Secondly, God has designs to accompliſh and bring about in this World, of which we are totally ignorant, and 'tis very unwise to find fault with what God

God does, and be angry that we cannot comprehend it when we know nothing of those Ends 'tis designed to. 'Twas weakly done of *Cato*, and a great defection from his *discretion*, to fall foul upon Providence; because he could not find out a Reason why *Cæsar* had the conquest of *Pompey*, when he must needs be ignorant of that future *Monarchy* (and all the Consequences of it) God designed to set up in *Rome*, upon the foundation of his *Successes*. We see often, by a subsequent course of Providence, great Reason for that of which we could give no account at first. The future Events of good Mens *sufferings* often reveal to us a sufficient Reason for it, and reconcile mens opinions to the Wisdom and Justice of Providence. The impunity of ill Men in the worst Actions becomes sometimes very intelligible to us even in this World, by the after disposal of things. This we have excellently discoursed of in *Plutarchs* incomparable Treatise *De sera Numinis vindicta*. Had the famous *Constantine* suffered what was due to the eminent sins of his Youth, what a loss had the World had of the Virtues of his riper years? and as *Plutarch* tells the *Athenians*, if *Themistocles* had been punished as the enormities of his Youth deserved, and *Miltiades* for his rebellion in *Chersonesus*, where had been

been (ſayes he) thoſe great Victories, thoſe two afterwards obtained in the Plains of *Marathon* on the Coaſts of *Arleſia?* and at the River *Eurimedon?* The truth is, in all humane Judgment we are bounded by particulars. Individual actions are the Grounds upon which Men proceed. Nor can they look forward to know what any will be hereafter. But God has the *whole* of every Man before him, and has not only reſpect to the All of every Action, but to the *All* of every *Man*, in the *whole* of of his Actings from the *Firſt* to the *Laſt*. Thirdly. There is a *Harmony* in Providence, which (unleſs we knew All, from its *Beginning* to its *Ending*) we can never fully comprehend. 'Tis one intire *Syſtem*, a compleat *Bottom* wherein all *Ends* are exactly wound up: A rare contrivance of *Divine Wiſdom*: A curious piece of Divine Workmanſhip, wherein all particulars are ſo Interwoven as to make up the beauty of the whole. All the paſſages of the world, from firſt to laſt, have, in the providential Dominion of God over them, ſome dependency each upon other, and are not to be fully judged off ſingly, and a part. No One Action but relates to Millions of others; nay, has ſome reference to all others from the firſt to the laſt of the world. Each particular hath ſome reference to the

whole

whole, like the Parts of a Natural Body, where every Part refers to the Whole: And is not, in its use, to be fully comprehended without an exact knowledge of the Whole. Every part of Providence hath somewhat in it Relative to all the rest. Though God be Just in each particular, yet he still executes his Justice to every part with reference to the Whole; And so, Times and Orders all particulars that the *beautiful* season of every part is, when it bears its exact proportion to the *Oeconomy* of the Whole. Nor can we suppose this to be otherwise, but that God, who by an Infinite comprehension had all things present and before him, should so rank and dispose them, that at last the whole business of the World, should appear but One complicated and orderly united *Means* to bring about the first designed *Ends*.

This consideration of our own incapacity to make a full and compleat Judgment of the whole, or of many parts of Divine Providence, ought to prevent such rash Censures as Men are too apt to make upon it: And to perswade them not to *deny* it, where they cannot fully *comprehend* it: And to answer, in many cases, the doubts men may propose to themselves about this matter; but does not answer this Objection fully. Because 'tis not to be denied,

denied, but that there are very many particular cases wherein Gods Justice and his Providence are visibly not to be reconciled together in this World. And upon that consideration I say 'tis much more reasonable and natural to suppose the Being of a future *state* after this life (by which all Objections against Providence are fully answered) then to make that an Objection against Providence, and deny the Being of it thereupon, and that upon these two grounds. First, the existence of a *general* Providence is, upon convincing evidence proved to us. We have as good Reason to believe God *Rules* the World, as we have to believe that he is *Just*. And in that case, when we find we cannot, here in this World, accommodate his *Rule* and his *Justice* together, 'tis not reasonable to *oppose* the one by the other (when neither can be rationally denied) but to admit a *state* beyond this World, by which they are both safely reconciled. Secondly, there is nothing in the admission of a future state, in it self any way unreasonable: Nay, the existence of such a future state after this life, besides the evidence it has from the notion of Providence, has also many other rational proofs peculiarly appurtenant to it, and is a thing in it self, upon other grounds, highly probable. He

that will bottom a denial of Providence singly upon this Objection, must prove that there is no state of things after this life, or at least, have it granted to him. The proof of it is impossible, and the grant of it were very unreasonable, when 'tis a natural and necessary consequent to all that rational proof that is made of a Providence in general, and I cannot deny the one without rejecting the other; the thing in its own Nature, is greatly credible, and has been believed in all Ages, not only by the greatest part of the wisest and best, but even of the rudest and most barbarous, [redacted] which strongly tend to perswade us the belief of it is founded in the dictates of right Reason, and the common Sentiments of Nature.

'Tis to be taken as an undeniable Truth, that the existence of Providence, and the Being of a future state have a necessary dependency each upon other, and are no way seperable. If there be a Providence, there must be a future state after this life. And if there be a state hereafter, it must relate to a Providence here: The *Epicureans* therefore deny both. *Epicurus* under all his pressures made his retreat to this Maxime, *That there had been* a time when we were *not in Being*, and there would be a time when we should exist

exiſt no more. Of how little a ſignification to the World the bare notion of a Deity would prove, abſtracted from the belief of a Providence here, or any ſtate hereafter, is eaſie to diſcern. The Truth is, whoever admits the exiſtence of a *Supreme* and firſt being, will be rationally forced to acknowledge the other two. If there be a God, he muſt Rule: Infinite power cannot be ſet by; and if he do Rule, there muſt be a reverſion of rewards and puniſhments after this life, ſo *Plutarch* obſerves. The ſame Reaſon which confirms Providence, doth likewiſe confirm the immortality of the Soul: And if the one be taken away, the other follows; ſo that the great fundamentals of all Virtue and Religion will appear ſufficiently juſtified to us from the regular determinations of right Reaſon.

Upon theſe and many other invincible proofs is Gods providential Rule over the World eſtabliſhed. The true notion of which frees us from the manifold abſurdities of *Epicurus* his *chance*, and *Chryſippus* his *deſtiny*, the two wide extreams on either hand. The firſt is the pooreſt account that ever was given of ſuch Oeconomy as we ſee in this World, and a monſtrous piece of folly, to think *Chance* ſhould be *Predominant* whilſt

infinite *wisdome* is existing. The other such an unreasonable and abusive fiction of Providence, (if related to God) as renders it inconsistent with the freedom of a Rational Agent. The one denies all providence and makes God to do nothing: The other destroys mans freedome, and makes God to do every thing. Both equally false. 'Tis true, that God Rules over the *Whole*; And 'tis as true that his *Rule* no way destroys the freedom of mans *will*. Nor is the world subjected to any such thing as a *Stoical Fate*, from any necessary connection of causes, but all the actions of men proceed from the free choice and determinations of their own breasts. Every mans own *Will* being the true cause of his own *doings*.

Thus much may serve to silence and shame all the ignorant doubts and profane denials of providence, to assure men there is a God that Rule's in the earth, and to justifie the exercise of a supreme *Dominion* over the world. Upon the truth of which the validity of all Divine Laws must necessarily depend. Such who (in the third place) admit the being of *God*, of *Providence*, and *Religion*, but reject the *Christian-religion* and consequently the *Bible*, as not true, and close with some other in opposition to it, against those the whole of this

this discourse will chiefly tend. If the *Divine Authority* of the *Bible* be sufficiently made good, and the *Scriptures* proved in trueth to be what themselves tell us they are, *Laws sent us from God, by which he will Rule and judge the world*, two things will result from it. first, All *other Religions* but the *Christian* will thereby appear to be *false* and *fictitious*. Secondly, Such who have embraced the *Christian Profession* will be abundantly confirmed in the *verity* thereof, freed from all such doubts as may arise about it, and be ascertained of the truth of those *grounds* upon which it is established.

In the prosecution of this matter, when we deal with *Antiscriptural men*, such as pay no homage at all to the *Bible*, nor yield any obedience to its Authority, two things are to be avoided, and ought not to be insisted on, in order to their confutation. First, 'Tis not a reasonable step towards it, to say the *Scriptures* are the *Principle* upon which our *Religion* is *built*, and therefore ought to be *granted* to us: Because, in every particular Science, some *Principles* must be *granted* as the *Substratum*; without which it cannot be upheld, and by a *denial* of which the *being* of it is *subverted*. This unwary demand is the ready way to fix *every* man in his *own profession* whatever it be, and to prevent the most important

Discourse of *Religion* amongst *all* such who have already embraced *any* Religion; for there is *no* Religion without some *prime Principles* upon which 'tis erected, and by the *grant* of which it will be established. And as we are sure 'twill be equally expected, so there is no better ground upon which it can be denyed: Nor no less reason why *we* should admit the principles of *other mens* Religion, then *they* grant *ours*. And if so, we shall soon come to a full point in all our *debates* about *different Religions*. To such who have already closed with the *Christian-profession*, this holds good. And he that admits not the *Scriptures* as the first *Principle* and *Rule* of all discourse upon any internal point of the *Christian-Religion*, is not to be disputed with, Because, in disowning that principle, he destroys the *being* of the *Religion* he is contending about, and subverts the *whole* by the manner of his disputing about a *part*. But when we deal with men *out* of the *Church* and *Enemies* to it, and the doubt is about the *Scripture it self*, we cannot otherwise defend it then by admitting it a matter *Debateable*, and indeavouring its justification upon principles *common* to us *both*, and such *rational grounds* as carry in them the greatest *aptness* to *convince* such *opponents*.

'Tis

'Tis not to be denied but that in all Rational enquiries after truth and all *humane*-debates, there must be some *common maxims* and *principles* acknowledged on *all sides*, without which there can be no due measures of any discourse, nor any Standard by which a man can proceed either to satisfy himself or convince another, and 'twill be utterly impossible ever to come to a rational end of any debate whatever. For, If *one* thing be to be proved (as it must be where things are in controversy) by *another*, and every thing may be still denied, we must prove *in infinitum*. He that oppoſeth needs nothing to help him but a bare *Negative*, and he that is to prove will be lost in an endless circle. Some principles therefore there are which govern all mens thoughts and discourses as things *granted* by them, and are of absolute necessity to the rational conduct of the World. And they are of two sorts; First, Such as are in themselves so obviously true to our *Senses* and *Reason* that they gain an *Universal Assent*, and are approved by the common *Vote* of *Mankind*. These are such things as no man can be supposed to deny if he would, no more then he can deny himself to be *Reasonable*; and do discover to us the truth of the rational faculty, by the natural Emanation of which we

fix upon many positions as undoubtedly true and beyond all question or dispute, and from thence measure out the truth of all other things. Therefore *Aristotle* says, *that in all acquisition of knowledg there is a proceeding from premisses known and agreed, to conclusions that before were not known nor agreed.* These first principles are secured by the innate rectitude of the rational faculty. These prove themselves by their consonancy to the rational Nature, and cannot be otherwise proved, because they are the ground and foundation of all other proof. And of these 'tis true what the Schools say, *A posteriori possunt manifestari, non per aliquid prius probari.* Whatever knowledge we find attained to amongst Mankind, 'tis deduced from these first principles, and is a Science subalternated to them. 'Tis from hence that all thoughts and debates are steered to some end, and guided to some conclusion. These principles are not to be confined to any enumeration, being of equal extent with the rational capacity it self, and are occasionally produced by our reason, according to the various objects 'tis conversant about. Nor can any other Character be given of them but that they are *such genuine Issues of Reason, as become self-evident Maximes to the universal Reason.*

Secondly,

Secondly, There are *acquired* principles amongſt mankind, which are taken as granted truths, and proceeded upon as ſuch, that are not of this firſt nature. Theſe ſecondary principles lye more remote from the firſt view of our reaſon, and are diſcovered by a chain of *Inductions*; and our aſſent to them proceeds from an *Induſtrious exerciſe of reaſon*, by which we come at length to acknowledg their verity, as agreeing to that *idea* of truth we find ſeated in the rational Nature, and correſponding to thoſe primary dictates of Reaſon, and equally true with them. Theſe things men accidentally make principles to themſelves; and, laying them aſide from debate, as things granted and agreed to, proceed to ſuperſtruct other notions and principles upon them; ſuch principles as theſe (in the purſuit whereof mankind doth greatly differ, and often miſtake) are the reaſonable bounds of all ſuch future debates as are bottom'd upon them, but ought not to be impoſed when the principles themſelves are in queſtion, nor upon ſuch who make it their buſineſs to oppoſe them as erroneous and miſtaken. When two *Mahumetans* are in diſpute, the authority of the *Alcheran is*, to them, a proper *Umpirage*, becauſe a principle granted by both. But when a *Mahumetan* diſputes with a *Chriſtian*, the proof

proof of the Alchoran it self must precede any proof he can make of Religion from thence; because whatever is it self under question and doubt, can never be a Rule to determine other controversies by.

Nor ought this (the fact whereof is so verified to us) to seem strange, that men should often mistake and generally differ and divide upon all such acquired principles, as they do, that 'tis hard, if not impossible, to find an instance wherein the whole World have been able universally to take one step together, beyond those first and irrisistible institutes of Knowledge, and those primary Elements of a rational Being. 'Tis no way strange to see what is laid as a foundation by one, should seem an absolute nullity in the mind of another. What one man resigns up himself to, as his guide, another should reject with contempt. If we consider, first the difficulty wherewith all acquired knowledg is attained, and the various paths men tread towards it: How hard it is to reduce things to a Harmony with the rational Nature! With what labour and sweat of the mind we come to measure out things by the line of our Reason, and to find out those proper Mediums of demonstration that lie in a direct line to the truth of any propofition! And how natural is it to doubt and

and object to the utmoſt in all rational progreſſion! Secondly, with what various abilities the World is capacitated for all intellectual attainments! and how differently men do improve their knowing faculty! Firſt principles ariſe from the Truth of our Reaſon in its naked exiſtence; but all ſecond Principles from the exerciſe and improvement of it. How few be there that travel ſo far as their own Reaſon would guide them! or ſuffer that noble faculty to do what it would do! What unequal concerns have Mankind about Truth! 'Tis the Jewel and delight of ſome, 'tis an abſolute Drug to others. Some men make the Talent of their Reaſon ten Talents; o-others fold up their knowing faculty in the ſlumber of a drowzie ſenſuality. The greateſt part of the World ſit down ſatisfied with what they do know, not what they might know: And chooſe a lazy enjoyment of ignorance and errour, rather then an inquiſitive poſſeſſion of Truth. Men are not only born of ſeveral Statures in the knowing part, but they continually render themſelves ſo, by the various and different improvement of thoſe abilities they poſſeſs. Thirdly, the faculty of our Reaſon it ſelf renders all things capable of diſpute and debate that are not bounded with viſible contradiction to its own Being,

and

and are beyond the limits of those primary Laws it necessarily gives to it self, and makes various determinations about all such disputable matters, and very often where we may well suppose an equal ability on both sides, men differ about the same thing. The cause whereof must not be imputed to any innate defect in the rational Nature, as if God had made us with a lame faculty (for whoever denies the truth of that, must needs retort the lie to himself; because he has no other faculty to judge by) but the true Reason of it lies collaterally, either first, From the difficulty relative to our Reason, in the Objects 'tis conversant about, from whence may well be supposed to arise various and different Sentiments: for all things are not in their own Nature capable of positive determinations; we meet with few things without some difficulty, but with very many things that greatly pose us: with some things so much out of our reach that they exceed all bounds of comprehension, are beyond the Verge of *Problems*, and serve only to shew us the limits of a finite understanding. Or Secondly, from the want of such perfect information, as is requisite to ground a compleat and perfect Judgment upon: There being not a little share of uncertain guess and conjecture mingled with most of

of our Knowledge of things, which nothing bnt experience can deliver us from. Or Thirdly, (which is moſt general, and an undeniable evidence of Mans fall) From the Byaſs of ſome Intereſt or Concern whereby Men are engaged, or ſome natural propenſity and inclination they are born with, that oppoſeth and undiſcernedly prevails over the true and genuine iſſues of Reaſon inſlaves them to appetite, and ſways the Judgment another way. 'Twas therefore a prudent obſervation that one made heretofore upon thoſe various Sects that aroſe amongſt the *Philoſophers* in *Græce*, that *Qui fuerunt ingenio ſevero, rigido, & moroſo, querulo, & aroganti, ij Stoiciſmum ſunt amplecti, qui vero fuerunt ingenio molli, & ſtudioſi tranquillitatis & otij, ij fuerunt* Epicurei, *qui deniq; fuerunt ingenio civili, modeſtoq; & liberali, ij Peripateticorum Doctrinam ſunt ſecuti.* And *Ariſtotle* in his Diſcourſe of the *Summum Bonum*, ſayes, *Unumquemq; prout animo affectus eſt, ita de Summo Bono judicare, atque inde oriri quod alij Summum Bonum collocant in Divitiis, alij in Honoribus, alij in Voluptate.* 'Tis from hence, and from thoſe many other circumſtantial impediments we are liable to in all our rational determinations, and not from the faculty of our Reaſon in it ſelf conſidered, that hath been derived

derived that great variety of Judgment and Opinion whereby the World, in all the Ages of it, hath been divided.

Of this second sort of acquired and accidental Principles is Mens assent to and belief of the Scriptures, as a Book penned by *Divine Inspiration*, and being of *extraordinary Mission* from God. 'Tis not of those first born Principles of Reason, from which we cannot dissent without an apparent absurdity, and therefore is not within the compass of those first prærequisites to all debate and discourse, and the standing boundaries of all Ratiocination: but, is of such a Nature as admits mens doubts, quæries and debates about it. And the absolute positive belief of it is not to be imposed upon any man, but all men reasoned and discoursed into an assent to it, upon such grounds as are most suitable to such a subject, and mens satisfaction about it. Natural Religion is born with men, and is connate with their Beings, and must be supposed. But all supernatural Religion is discoursed into men, and makes its entrance that way. Though it be true, that in all Sciences there must be some Principles granted, yet they ought to be no other, nor need to be, then such as are general and common to all Mankind, and such as lie adequate

equate to every mans Reason: And not such as are only the property of one party, and are peculiar to men of one perswasion. Whenever men (in order to the founding of any Science) lay down positions and Principles upon which they proceed, if such Principles be beyond the first and common rudiments of every mans Reason, though in themselves never so true, yet they ought to be subject to debate, and admitted questionable in all Reasonings about that very Science. Not to admit some universal Maxims, is the way to make Mankind certain of nothing; and to admit any particular mens Opinions, as indisputable Principles, is the way to inslave the World to every party. The *Scriptures* are the first Principles of *Christians*, but not of *Men*. The first of *Christian Religion*, but not of all *Science*: And therefore we ought to begin their Proof against all *Antiscriptural opposition*, from the *common Notions* of *every* mans *Religion* and *Reason*, and from thence induce an assent to their *Divine* and *Sacred Authority*; which we shall find God has made sufficiently evident to a rational and impartial inquiry.

Secondly, The Testimony given by the *Holy Ghost* in the *Minds* and *Consciences* of Men, to the Truth of the *Scriptures* (though it be the most

most convincing Evidence that can be given to them, and that way God is pleased to reserve to himself of giving men an unquestionable satisfaction about that, and all other Divine things yet) 'tis not to be urged in proof of the Scriptures, against its professed Adversaries: And that upon two accounts.

First, Because the blessed Spirit it self is not a *common* demonstrable Principle amongst Mankind, and so cannot be made use of against those that know no such Testimony, nor admit the being of any such Principle. Nothing but what a man does assent to, can with any good Reason, be urged upon him to prove what he does not assent to. To go about to prove the *Scriptures* by any Evidence arising from the *Holy Ghost* must needs be visibly absurd; because there is no other way to prove that there is any such thing in Being as the *Holy Ghost*, but by the *Scriptures* themselves. So that what I am about to prove, must first be *admitted* before I can make good the existence of that *Medium* I take to prove it by.

Secondly, Whatever Evidence the Holy Ghost gives to any man, to assure him of the Truth of any proposition, that Evidence, as such, can never go beyond *his own Breast*, nor can

can I ever prove any thing by it, as it is a Divine and infallible Evidence; becauſe ſuch Evidence is no way Communicable to another but in an ordinary way. Nothing is viſible to another in ſuch caſes, but the Reaſons I can produce. The Divine illumination I have within my ſelf to convince me that ſuch Reaſons are Cogent and prevailing, can never be ſo demonſtrated as to convince another that has no ſuch illumination. The illuminations of the Holy Ghoſt in the Minds of Men are no other way to be conceived of, then that he is pleaſed to propoſe the right Grounds and Reaſons upon which things are to be believed, and to convince and ſatisfie the underſtanding that they are ſo, and to bring men to acquieſce in Concluſions by aſſertaining them of the Truth of the Premiſes. 'Twere *Heterodox* and falſe, and one of the worſt ſorts of *Enthuſiaſme*, to ſay, That Divine illumination were not always accompanied with rational Evidence. And that any thing were the product of the *Holy Ghoſt* in the Minds of Men, for which no Reaſon could be given, 'twere moſt unſuitable to a reaſonable being, and moſt contrary to the manner of Gods dealing with Men; all the intercourſe between God and Man being maintained by the trueſt exerciſe of our rational faculties, and no other-

wise. Whoever rests assured from a Divine Testimony of the Truth of the *Scriptures* as coming from God, may deal with an *Antiscripturist* by those *Grounds* and *Reasons* upon which such Testimony is built: But will vainly and to no purpose urge that satisfaction he receives of the validity of such Grounds and Reasons from such a Testimony, when that *Testimony* can be no further made *Evident* then by such *Reasons* and *Arguments* as he is able to produce for it, of the *sufficiency* of which every *other* Mans Reason, in an ordinary way, must necessarily be the *Judge*.

To this present undertaking, there ought also to be this præliminary Consideration, that as there are *divers Things* of *divers Natures*, true, so there are *various ways* of rendring the Truth of them *Evident*, and Mediums of proof proper and peculiar to each. This is visible in *Æthicks*, in *Physicks*, in *Mathematicks*, and in all other *Sciences*. When we discourse of the *Bible*, divers things will come in question, the Truth of which, by *various Mediums* of proof must be established. First, in the general, whether it be reasonable to believe that there should be any such *Supernatural Law* as this, sent from Heaven or no! This is to be cleared from the exercise of our own Reason, and the common

mon principles of such natural Religion as every man is born with. Secondly, whether this Book, as 'tis now proposed to us, be, in the *Matter* of it, such as is *likely* to come from God, and to be that Law by which the Supreme Maker of all things would *Rule* and *Judge* the World! This must also be cleared from that *Natural Divinity* that lodges in every Mans own Breast, and those primary Notions of God and Religion, which all unprejudiced Reason assents to, and which are antecedently supposed to all discourses of Revelation, and whatever is Supernatural. Thirdly, whether this Book was written by *those Persons* whose Names it bears, and in those *Times* wherein it avows it self to be written! Whether such Miracles were wrought! such Prædictions fulfilled! All things of that Nature (being matters of fact) must be proved to us by *credible Testimonies*, and by such means as can ascertain us about a matter of fact, and a thing long since past. He that demands to be satisfied about a matter of *fact* long since past, and yet denies to acquiesce in *Historical Evidence*, is so absurd, as at the same time to propose a *Doubt*, and resolves against all way of *Answer*. Fourthly, whether this Book, as now we have it, be the *same* it was when it was *first written*! and have

not been since *corrupted* or *changed*! The proof of this depends upon what may be rationally urged to make it credible, That this Book should still be secured by a *Divine care*, and to render the ways and means Historically Evident, by which such a Divine care, in all Times and Ages, hath been exerted. And so, in all other things that may be in doubt about the *Bible*, there are proper inducements to our belief (as will appear hereafter) and such as the Nature of such a subject requires. And he that will not acquiesce in a belief of things upon the Evidence they are *capable* of (though perhaps, not so full and convincing as some other things will afford) declares himself to be obstinately *willful* and absurd. Nothing can now be urged in proof of the *Bible*, that will come under any sensible demonstration. The proposal of this Book to the World to be received as a *Law Divine*, is not so made as by *Mathematical* Evidence, or gross visible absurdities in its denial, to introduce it self irresistably at the first sight. But this book is so proposed to our belief, as that all men, by a serious and impartial consideration of the matter of it, and a due enquiry into all the Circumstances attending it, may have ground sufficient to acquiesce in it as

as *Divine*, and judge it to be such as it self claims to be.

And that the *Bible* should be upon such terms and no other proposed to the belief of the World, seems highly reasonable, when we consider that God intends this book as the great *SHIBBOLETH*, by which he will *try* the World; that from the believing or not believing of it, shall arise the great *discrimination* between Virtuous and Good Men, and such who free from the prevailing influence of corrupt and sensual Interests pursue the Genuine dictates of right *Reason*, and *improve* those notions of *Divinity* they are born with, and *others* who either choose to be *Sottishly Ignorant*, or else *wilfully* to *oppose* what God has made in it self most suitable and corresponding to the Reason and Conscience of every unprejudiced Man. The truth is, our *Assent*, or *not*, to the *Bible*, is made a matter of *Reward* and *Punishment*. And therefore 'tis so proposed to our belief, that there may be a sufficient *ground* for *both*.

The way to this Discourse in hand being thus far cleared, I shall now prosecute the design of it, in this method. First I will indeavour to render it a thing reasonable to be believed that there *should be some supernatural*

Law revealed from God and given to mankind (in order to their present and future happiness) as the great *Guide* and *Rule* of all their actions towards God and towards each other. And that 'tis not a reasonable supposal that the world, in the posture we find it, should be left singly to the conduct of *Nature*. Secondly, That 'tis most rationally credible, upon all such grounds by which a judgment in this case ought to be established, That *this Book* we call the *Bible* is *this Revealed Law* superadded to our natural Light, and contains in it self that *compleat System of Divine Truth* by which God will *Informe*, *Rule*, and *Judge* the World. And this I shall endeavour a proof of, from the *matter* of this Book it self, and from such external concomitants of it, as highly concur to create a belief of its *Divine Authority*. And lastly, propose all such considerable *Doubts*, *Queries*, and *Difficulties* as the minds of men are usually busied withall about this Matter. And attempt their *Satisfaction* therein.

To make the first thing proposed evident, that 'tis Reasonable to believe, in the general, that God *should* give us some *further direction* then what our Natural Light will afford us: That he should promulge some *Supernatural Law* to the world: Let these several things

things following be duely considered. First, What wretched and dismal *Ignorance* has the world been in, yea the wisest and best parts of it, and in what *disagreement* with it self about all parts of *Religion*, where this supernatural Law hath been either not *known* or not *received*! How sadly hath that inbred principle of Religion wherewith all men are born, been seduced and mislead, where there has been nothing supernatural to guide and direct it! The natural notion of a Deity has corrupted into all folly and vanity, and men have formed Religions not only hateful to God, but at last nauseous to *themselves*. Devotion, men still had, to *somewhat above them*, but they knew not well how to express it. The Wisest saw reason enough to *scorn* their own *Religion*, but knew not how to compose a better. Some went farr in the *Negative*, in saying what ought *not* to be, that then was, amongst themselves, but none ever attained to a certain *directory* of what *should* be. When we view over the utmost products of all humane abilities, and the greatest discoveries at any time made by natural light, we shall find the world without Revelation to have been greatly defective in these three things. First, in their *Divinity*, in their conceptions of the *Deity*, and their *Worship* of him. Secondly, In the

account they gave to themselves of the worlds first *Production* and of the *Origine* of things. Thirdly, In their *Morality*, and in their *Ethical Institutes* of humane life, and the converse of mankind together. First, In their *Divinity*. *Varro* ranks all the Heathen *Theology* under three heads, Their *Fabulous* and *Historical* Theologie, Their *Natural* and *Mystical* Theology, Their *Civil* and *Political* Theology, which he also calls *Mythical*, *Physical*, and *Civil*. The first came from their *Poets*, and contains such a *Rapsody* of *Nonsense* and *Folly*, as the like to it hath not, upon any occasion, nor upon any subject, been collected since the world began; That one God was born from a *Mans Head*, another from a *Mans Thigh*, a third from some *drops* of *Blood*. That some Gods were *Thieves*, others *Adulterers*, others *Servants* to *Men*, with multitudes of such absurd and ridiculous fictions. The Second sort came from their *Wise men*, and from their *Philosophers*. They dispute *what* the Gods are! *Where* they are! And *whence* they are! And amongst them, we find an endless diversity, and most stupendious folly; some making the gods to consist of *Fire*, some of *Numbers*, others of *Atoms*, and by their Mystical Divinity interpreting *Jupiter* to *Fire*, *Juno* to *Earth*, *Pluto* to *Air*, *Nestis* to *water*, and

and others of their Gods to the ſeveral parts of the World, with many other ſo groſs and notorious abſurdities, that *Juſtin Martyr* tells the *Græcians* that *the Divinity of their Philoſophers, Multo ſit quam Poetarum Theologia atq; de Diis doctrina ridiculoſior, is much more abſurd then that of their Poet.* The third ſort relates it ſelf to the *Laws* and *Cuſtomes* of particular *Cities* and *Countreys*, by which they ordered their *Prieſts* what *Gods* they ſhould *worſhip*! at what *Times*, and *Seaſons*! and upon what *occaſions*, what *Sacrifices*, and *Services*! and all things relating to the exerciſe of their *Religion*, both upon the *Stages* in their *Theatres*, and alſo in their *Temples*. For in the one, they repreſented their Gods, and had Plaies acted in honour to them, as a part of Religion, and in the other they Worſhipped them. In all which we find them ſhedding the blood one of another, and offering moſt inhumane ſacrifices, and a numberleſs multitude not only of childiſh and fooliſh, but profane and impious, obſcene and laſcivious rites and ceremonies. If we look back as farr as any Heathen *Records* will carry us, and view over the *Barbarous* Nations of the world (for ſo the *Græcians* were pleaſed to call all but themſelves according to that of *Varro, Barbaræ ſunt omnes nationes præter Græcos*) the *Phœnicians*

cians, the *Caldeans*, the *Egyptians*, and such others as we have any account of in story, we shall find them lost in a strange mist of *Ignorance*, about all points of Religion, and we shall find *Idolatry* to be an *Early* as well as an *Epidemical* disease. The worship of the *Sun* beginning probably not long after the *Babylonian* dispersion. And the *Caldeans*, who are upon good grounds supposed to be the first people that associated themselves into a national government after the flood, hasted apace into all kind of *Idolatry*. *Bell* or *Belus* (for it is the same Name) the next successor of *Nimrod* and first King of *Babel* after him, being Canonized for a *Daemon* and *Deified* by them after his death. It has fill'd some Volumes with tedious and nauseous vanities, the Narrative of the Divinity and Mythology of those and other Nations, the Names and Derivations of their Gods (the most Rational of which were the *Sun*, *Moon* and *Stars*) with all their wild and fabulous Theological inventions and fancies about the worship and service of them. This we find by the most Ancient writers of their own, and have also a large account thereof in *Diodorus Siculus*, the first that made a collection of general History, and (as *Eusebius* says of him) was *Vir apud Graecos clarissimus, quippe qui Universam Histo-*

ria

riam ad unum commodissime corpus collegit. Nor was this ignorance and blindness wherewith the world, in its more barbarous condition was benighted, any way Cured by the increase of Knowledge and the propogation of humane Science: But *Idolatry* grew up with *Philosophy*. The Number of their *gods* increased with their *Philosophers*. The more they knew, the *more gods* they worshipped. The more men improved toward the utmost strength of humane abilities, the more visible was their impotency about Divine things, and the more did principles of superstition and idolatry expatiate themselves amongst Mankind. The Reason of which seems to be, that being unable by their natural enquiries, to arrive at a right knowledge of the true God, and a Certainty in Divine things, their *contemplations* did but multiply their *mistakes*, and mens greatest *abilities* proved but a prolifick *Nursery* of *Errours*. Yea, the more *devotion* they had from a clearer knowledg of a deity in general, and the farther discovery they made of a *state* of *mankind after this life*, the more propense they were to an universal *Apostacy* to all the ills of Superstition and Idolatry, by representing false *Images* of those things to themselves, and dilating those Apprehensions into Multiplied Objects both

of

of Fancy and Sence, having no clear and fixed notions whereby to rescue themselves from their own fluctuations about those matters.

That we call *Learning* (which is nothing else but acquired Knowledg resulting from the improvement of our rational faculties) if we consider its rise, 'tis not to be doubted but that the several parts of it had their first productions from the Nations the *Græcians* caled *barbarous*, and were begun amongst them as the position of each Countrey, and the inclination of each people variously led to them. If we consider the progress learning hath taken, it came from all other parts, and first concenter'd in *Græce*, removed thence to *Rome*, and in the Declension of that Empire, diffused it self into all these *European* parts of the World. To make the *Græcians* the first Authors of it, as some do, and to derive it originally from them, is to abuse the World with a false and fictitious pretention, as if all the rational part of the World had been in a Lethargie but themselves, and all mens intellectuals had lain in a Trance, and been first awakened in *Græce*. 'Tis true, that what lay scatter'd in several hands, was their first eminently united, and greatly improved by the singular abilities and industry of their *Philosophers*

losophers; but to all parts of the known world were they indebted for the general grounds of their Knowledge. *Ab omnibus ferè Barbaris Artes & utilia ad vitam Documenta* Græcos *didicisse*, sayes *Eusebius*. And he tells us after, their *Astronomy* they had from the *Chaldeans*, their *Geometry* from the *Egyptians* (without doubt the most learned of all the *barbarous* Nations) their *Letters* from the *Phœnicians*, and the notion of *one God* from the *Hebrews*. *Clemens Alex.* sayes, *Vita me deficiet si velim sigillatim* Græcorum *furta persequi*. *Stromat.* Pag. 149. Two famous benefactors they had that all Story makes visible: *Cadmus* who first brought them the inestimable Treasure of Letters, and instructed them in the *Phœnician* Religion and Learning, and *Orpheus*, who instructed them in all the *Egyptian* Knowledg. Some of themselves, as *Democritus*, *Heraclitus*, *Pythagoras*, and others who travelled much into remote parts, acknowledg the great Forreign helps they received: But especially *Plato*, of whom *Clemens Alex.* sayes, *Clarum est autem semper inveniri* Platonem *magnis facere barbaros, utqui meminisset se &* Pythagoram *plurima eaq; præstantissima & nobilissima dogmata didicisse apud Barbaros*. *Stromat* Lib. 1. *Lactantius* tell us, that *Pythagoras*, and after him *Plato*, were so inquisitive after Truth, that they

they travelled into *Egypt* and *Persia*, and other Countreys to be informed of their Religion and Learning, and wonders they never went to the *Jews*. Which if you believe *Strabo*, *Pythagoras* did; for he tells us, that *Pythagoras* went into *Jewry* and dwelt a long time at Mount *Carmel*. *Aristotle* plainly owns the rise of *Phylosophy* to be forreign to *Grece*, and sayes, *Persis*, *Magos*, *Babylonijs & Assyrijs Caldæos*, *Indis Gymnosophistas*, *Celtis seu Gallis Druidas*, *& qui Semnothei appellabantur*, *ejus rei fuisse Authores*. Many of the *Grecians* we know boast much to the contrary: *Diogenes Laertius* in the beginning of his Works, seems more positive against it then any; for for he tels us, that such who think other Nations, before the *Grecians*, began to *Philosophize*, *Per imprudentiam* Græcorum *recte facta inventaque Barbaris applicant*, *ab ijs enim non solum Philosophia*, *verum ipsum quoq; humanum genus initio manavit*. Two things well joyned, and of equal credibility; the latter as probable as that fabulous *tradition* amongst the *Egyptians*, *That Mankind came first out of* Egypt, *and were there originally produced by the River* Nile: And the former against the best and most ancient History, and positively disproved by some of the chiefest *Grecian Philosophers* themselves. Nor are the Reasons he gives after

after for it, so considerable, that they deserve either to be confuted or named.

Whatever could be done without supernatural help, by the Wisdom and industry of Men, seems to be attained to between that time wherein Learning flourished in *Græce*, and the declension of the *Roman Empire*. The most famous Men that the World hath had, for all natural acquirements flourishing in that compass of time in *Græce* and in *Rome*. And yet there needs no greater or other Evidence of mans defect without *Revelation*, then the Records of those very times. If we consider, first, how mean, confused, and uncertain an acccount they gave of the *first cause* of things, and of the *Origine* of the World. *Thales Miletius* the founder of the *Ionick School*, who was *Antiquissimus Sapientum* in *Græce*, and the first Author amongst them of that Science they afterwards called *Natural Philosophy*, and came neareſt to the Story of *Moses*, he derived all things from *Water*. *Rerum omnium principium dixit esse Aquam; ex Aqua namq; omnia existere, & in Aquam resolvi omnia.* Following therein *Homer* the great Prophet of *Græce* (whose Books were indeed the great *Pagan-Bible*, and from whom not only most of the *Græcian Religion*, but most of all the *Heathen Theology* was after derived)

rived) for he makes the *Sea* the common Parent of all things.

Ὠκεανὸν, ὃ θεῶν γένεσις πάντεσσι τέτυκται.

Oceanum rerum genuit qui cuncta parentem.

Yea, of the Gods themselves; for he derives their Pedigree no higher,

Ὠκεανόν τε Θεῶν γένεσιν καὶ μητέρα Τηθύν.

Oceanumq; Deûm patrem Tethymq; parentem.

Anaximander, his Successor, he thought the World came from no one particular thing, but that all things had their proper and singular beginnings, which he held to be Infinite, and that Infinite Worlds were thereby begotten, all which had their successive *Original*, *Continuance* and *End*. *Anaximenes* he thought all things came from *Air*, *Ex Aëre omnia fieri, & in hunc desinere omnia*. *Heraclitus* ascribed all to *Fire*, thought all things came first from *Fire*, and would revert to *Fire* again. *Pythagoras*, the Author of the *Italick Philosophy*, and the first introducer of the *Name* of *Philosophy*, according to *Laertius*; And as *Clemens Alex.* tells us, the first that took the *Name* of a *Philosopher* upon himself; which St. *Austin* sayes he did out of *modesty*, refusing to be called a *Wise* man (which every *Philosopher* was before) but chose rather to stile himself a *lover* of *wisdom*; he ascribed all things

things to *Numbers*. 'Twere endleſs to mention all the abſurd and contradictory ſpeculations the Philoſophers had about this matter. The three beſt of all the Philoſophers, who ſucceſſively inſtructed each other, and attained to the top of the *Gracian Literature*, *Socrates*, *Plato*, and *Ariſtotle*: What a Cloud did thoſe elevated underſtandings *ſet* in about theſe matters! *Socrates* (ſo far as we can judg of him by what his Scholars have collected of his, for he wrote nothing himſelf) ſaw ſo great *vanity* in the Sentiments of all the *Philoſophers* about theſe things, & withall was ſo convinc'd of his own inability to come to a right comprehenſion of them, that he applied himſelf chiefly to *Morality*, waved all diſputings about them, as uncertain and no way ſatisfying, and made his buſineſs to inſtruct men in the Rules of good living, and to withdraw them from ſuch ſpeculations wherein he found they had been ever benighted and loſt; which doubtleſs was the wiſeſt reſolve by far that any of them ever came to, it being a ſingular part of prudence to be *ſilent* in that about which we are *Ignorant*. And in this particular happily he made good what the *Oracle* ſaid of him, *Mortalium unus* Socrates *vere ſapit*. *Plato* aſſerts three firſt Principles of all things, *Deum*, *Materiam*, & *Ideam*. *Deum Conditorem omnium*; *Mate-*

riam autem primaria rerum genitarum generationi subjacentem, & Causam occasionemq; Deo creationis præbentem; Ideam porro Creaturæ cujusq; exemplar. And sometimes adds a fourth, *Animam universalem. Aristotle* makes but two Principles, *Deum & Materiam.* And indeed so contradicted the former Hypothesis of *Plato*, and so little agreement was there in those things between them (though he had been his *Scholer* from fifteen) that *Plato* complains, He kicked at him as Foals use to do at their Dames that have bred them up. Some thought the World Eternal without a Deity, *Aristotle* he thought it Eternal with a Deity, and that the World flowed naturally from the Divine Being, as light does from the Sun. Nor indeed was there any one Philosopher amongst them all, but held that the matter of the World in some posture or other (about which they much differed) was Eternal, as well as the Deity it self. And therefore one of the Ancients sayes, *Omnes Philosophi in hoc consenserunt semper, præter Deum ab omni Eternitate aliquid fuisse. In this all Philosophers have agreed, that there was somewhat else besides God from all Eternity.* They never admitted the matter of the World could possibly come originally from Divine *Potentiality*, and so from *nothing*; if you respect matter, that

that *Maxim*, *Fieri é nihilo nihil*, *in nihilum nil posse reverti*, was universal amongst them, and still confined by them all to the notion of matter.

For *Divinity*, no parts of the world, before or since, ever produced a farther *Corruption* therein then *Greece* and *Rome*, in their greatest splendor. They made Gods of all parts of the World, and of themselves living and dead. *Idolatry* was then in its *Meridian*. That natural notion men have of a *Deity* has been in no Age of the World more notoriously debauched to the very dregs of all false worship, then in those *knowing times*. Whatever they generally *loved* or *feared*, *fancied* and not *understood*, that they were sure to *Adore*. Their backs were bowed down with an ignorant implicite reverence to what they knew not, and so their *Devotions* proved as *ruinous* to them as their *Vices*. 'Twas their *Religion* in *Græce* that made men turn *Atheists*, and made that learned Countrey the first Soyl that ever *Atheisme* grew in. 'Twas so grosly absurd, and their Poets had made it so ridiculous, that it became *lothsome* to the most intelligent part of themselves. At *Athens* so blind were they in their Devotion, and withall so confused with the multiplicity of their own Deities, not sometimes knowing which to apply

to, that they inscribed Altars *to the unknown God* (by which they fell accidentally into the worship of the true God, before they were aware: for the unknown God, amongst them, was indeed the true God) The occasion of which we find in *Laertius*, in the life of *Epimenides*, who he sayes, in the time of the great Plague that was at *Athens*, *Oves albas & nigras in Areopagum adduxit, ac dimissis deinde quo ire vellent auctor fuit, ut ubi illi recubuissent ibi Sacrificarent* τῷ προσήκοντι θεῷ. These Altars are likewise mentioned by *Pausanias*, *Lib.* 1. and by *Phylostratus*, *Lib.* 6. Such Altars so inscribed also they had in *Rome*, upon the occasion of an *Earthquake* there, when they knew not which of their Gods to apply to, as appears by *Agelli. Lib.* 11. *Chap.* 28. In *Rome*, their Religion was growen to that height of absurdity, that one tels us in *Cicero*, the *Roman Priests* themselves did to such a degree, contemn their own *Devotions* and *Ceremonies*, that they could scarce forbear smiling at each other when they met in the Streets. 'Twere strange to believe God should be pleased with what *Men* mockt at themselves. *Cotta* in *Cicero*'s Books *de Nat. Deor.* sayes plainly, Religions must be continued as they were first instituted for the safety of Common-Wealths, but that otherwise all wise people laughed at those Mysteries,

Myſteries. Never any man ſcorn'd any thing more than *Cæſar* himſelf did his own gods, and as *Tertullian* obſerves, pleaſed himſelf often, in that he was able to make his gods feel the power of his anger. What a Childiſh folly 'twas then to believe that a *Roman Conſul* loſt his whole Army, becauſe he ſlighted the feeding of ſome young *Chickens*! or that *Marcus Craſſus* was therefore ſlain by the *Parthians*, becauſe he deſpiſed ſome fopperies of *Atteius*! If we look off from their publick Religion, and the general practice of their Divinity, and take a view of what the *Wiſeſt* and *Beſt* thought, what a poor product were all their *Notions*, compared with the *Bible*! What a *Midnight* were men in, in reſpect of *Religion*, in that clear *Sunſhine* of *Humane Knowledge*! *Socrates*, who ſaw the furtheſt of any man in the Age wherein he lived, into the vanity of the *Heathen Theology*, and died for a pretended *Contempt* of it, for the *Charge* that *Melitus*, one of his Accuſers brought againſt him at *Athens*, as *Laertius* ſayes, was, *Jura violat* Socrates, *quos ex majorum inſtituto ſuſcepit Civitas, Deos eſſe negans, alia vero nova Demonia inducens.* The firſt Philoſophical *Martyr* that we read of, has yet left but little better *Divinity* behind him: Nor can I perceive he had any deſign or ability to reform the World that way; for

he Answers his Charge by a flat *denial*, as appears by his Apology in *Plato* (and his whole carriage sufficiently assures us 'twas out of *choyce*, and not out of *fear* that he did so) Sometimes also, before, he advised others to content themselves with the Religion of the Countrey they lived in. And we find likewise in *Plato*, how uncertain and doubtful he was about that great point of the Soul's Immortality, and a future state of Men after this life, and could determine nothing with himself positively about it, though he seems to incline that way, and to think it the more probable opinion that the Soul is Immortal: Much in the same way that *Cicero* speaks of it in his *Tusculane Questions*, who gives it but a *probability*: And as *Plato* does in his *Phæd.* who sayes in the Conclusion of his discourse, that he is not certain about it, nor will not be confident of it. 'Twas doubtless a high degree of uncertainty in his thoughts about those matters that made him say, *He knew not whether 'twere better to dye or to live, and that 'twas a foolish thing to be troubled about that of which we have no certain Knowledge, whether it be to be desired or feared.* And when he came near to his end, he expressed great contentment in the hopes of being with *Hercules* and *Palamedes* in the next World; but still qualified those

those *Hopes* with this doubtfull *Parentheſis* (*In caſe the Soul be not extinguiſhed with the Body*) He choſe indeed to be rather a good *Moraliſt*, and to deal in thoſe Notions wherein he found ſome certainty, then to attempt much in the ſpeculative part of *Divinity*, being wholly unable to frame any ſatisfactory Notions to himſelf about the Being of God and Divine Worſhip. He often plainly declares that of the Nature of God, and the buſineſs of another World he was wholly ignorant, and many of the wiſeſt Philoſophers acknowledged as much, and thought thoſe things utterly beyond the reach of all Humane Knowledge, all Notions about them to be full of uncertainty, and therefore choſe to ſubmit to the Vulgar Sentiments, rather then perplex themſelves with doubtful and unſatisfying Speculations, and run the hazard of contradicting the publick Religion of thoſe Countreys where they lived. *Plato* the famous *Divine Philoſopher*, who exceeded all the *Gracian Philoſophers*, as much in the *Speculative* part of Religion, as *Socrates* did in the *Practick*, though there was more true *Divinity* uttered by him then by any of the *Philoſophers* (where he firſt had it, is not hard to determine) yet attended with marvellous vanities, and intollerable Errours. 'Tis not eaſie to forbear ſmiling in

reading over the account he gives of the Creation of the World (the matter of which he makes to be Eternal) the fabulous conceits he has about that and many other things of that Nature, 'twould tire out any ordinary patience to read. A great promoter he was of that gross Idolatry of *Damon-Worship*; for he sayes, *That when men die, their Souls become* Dæmons, *and if their merits be good, they are* Lares, *if Evil,* Lemures, *if different,* Manes. Of which St. *Austin* gives a large account, *De Civ. Dei, lib. 9. Ch.* 11. Though he speak much of *one God*, yet himself then (as all the *Platonists* since) held that many gods are to be Worshiped; and in his *Timæus*, he calls *Saturn, Ops; Juno*, and others *Gods*; and sayes, the *Dæmons* and *Heroe's* are to be *Sacrificed* to, and the good Estate of the City commended to them. *Cicero* observes likewise, out of his *Timæus*, that he spake with great obscurity and uncertainty about this *one God*. Sometimes calling him an *Eternal Mind*, And sometimes calling the *Sun, Moon*, and *Stars*, & all parts of the *World*, the Souls of men, and whatever the Heathens worshipped Gods. And at last concludes, that the whole of his Principles, *per se sunt falsa, & sibi invicem repugnantia, Are in themselves false, and self contradictious. Aristotle*, that great *Luminary* of the Rational World,

World, a man of a most *sagacious* wit, who travelled with such unparallel'd success through all the *Theorems* of Nature, and all parts of Humane Knowledge, what *Mushrom-Divinity* has he left behind him! With what obscurity, uncertainty, and confusion with himself, has he spoke of those two great fundamentals of all Religion, the Being of God, and the Immortality of the Soul! to such a degree that many of his Disciples since have avowed that he denied the latter. If out of *Aristotles* Books we should but extract a Model of his *Religion*, it might be for a Monument of *wonder*, that such a Giant in all Natural *Knowledge* should die such a *Child* in *Divinity*. *Cicero*, who carried the Top-Sail of Learning in the Age wherein he lived, to whom the elder *Pliny* gave this Testimony, *That he only had a Wit equal to the greatness of the* Roman *Empire*, why did not he compose a right *Systeme* of Divinity, and leave a good account of those things to posterity behind him? from whom might we with more Reason, have expected it? he designing the *Nature of the Gods*, and *Divinity* for his *Subject*? In the beginning of his Book, he tells us with what unequal Sentiments men had debated those matters! Some of the *Philosophers* doubted whether there were *any Gods*, as *Protagoras*;

Some

Some positively affirmed there were *none*, as *Diagoras* and *Theodorus Cyrenaicus*, *Qui vero Deos esse dixerunt, tanta sunt in varietate ac dissentione constituti, ut eorum molestum sit annumerare Sententias. Nam & de figuris Deorum, & de locis, atq; sedibus, & Actione vita, multa dicuntur. Deq; his summa Philosophorum dissentione certatur. And those* (says he) *that do acknowledge the Being of the Gods, have such various and different Opinions about them, that 'twere an extreme trouble to reckon them up; For, about the shape of the Gods, their imployments, and what they do, and the places where they are, there are endless dissentions amongst the Philosophers.* Now, why did not he, out of all the several Sentiments of the Philosophers, Compose a true notion of his *own*? unite their differences? and rectifie their mistakes by *one common Truth*? instead whereof we find him doing little else but repeating their various opinions; which amount to no less in number then four or five and twenty (and in *Diogenes Laertius* there is good store more) and generally condemning them all as false and extravagant, unworthy the names of their Authors, otherwise famous and learned men; and at last sits down finding his own inability for so impracticable a task, and has left the World not much more informed then they were before in that

that point. The Sum of his three Books of the Nature of the Gods, is indeed a perfect Condemnation of the whole Pagan Religion; for, he ſayes directly, All their Gods were but Men: and reckons up their Ages, their Garments, their Children, their Anceſtors, their Alliances, and plainly confeſſeth their Temples were their Tombs, and their Sacrifices and Ceremonies, repreſentations of their Lives, and the whole of their Religions, Superſtition and Vanity. But when he came to ſpeak of the Supreme Deity that made all things; yea, the Heathen gods themſelves, he openly declares his own Ignorance, and ſays he can ſooner admire then utter any thing, and better declare what the Deity is *not*, then what it *is*: And concludes upon the whole. *Utinam tam facile veram Religionem invenire poſsim, quam falſam convincere. I would I could as eaſily find out true religion, as diſcover that which is falſe.* Himſelf, *Socrates*, and ſome others of the wiſeſt of them, ſaw far into the Impotency of their own Religion; but I could never yet find that any of them arrived at any ability to compoſe a better. Nor can any man in any Age be produced that (without Revelation) has been able to give the world a right or ſatisfying information about the Being of God, and the Truth of Divine things.

It

It having been in fact according to what is observed by the most excellent *Mornay* in his discourse *De veritate Relig. Christ. Deniq; evolve quæcunq; a Priscis mundi sapientibus. To be short* (says he) *Amongst all the things which the Wise men of the World have written here and there of the Service of God ye may hap to find some one good saying, in a hundred years, and some one other in another hundred: But when ye have gathered them all together as diligently as you can, yet shall ye be able to make of them neither Rules nor Grounds nor scarcely good Problems. So greatly is man, by his corruption, both blinded in things concerning God, and helpless in things that concern his own welfare.*

Tis true, that many points of the *Christian Religion*, especially the three *Grand Fundamentals* of it, *The Being of God, his Providence and Rule over the World, and the Immortality of the Soules of men*, have been, even through these *Heathen Ages*, two ways acknowledged and justified. First, *Implicitely* and more *Remotely*, by the general and most corrupt practice of the *Ethnick-Religion*. What greater proof can there be of a *God*, and that the World still thought there was something *above* them, then their *grossest Idolatry?* All *Idolatry* apparently taking its rise from the *corruption* of mens *natural notion* of the

the *True God.* What meant their *Imaginary Deities* for every buſineſs, and for every part of the World, and their *applications* to them upon all occaſions, to ſeek their favour, and appeaſe their anger, but that they ſuppoſed a *Supreme Diſpoſal* of things, and that the World was *Ruled* by a *Divine Providence*? And what ſignified all their fictions about *Heaven* and *Hell*, and their adoration of *Dæmons*, and the worſhip of *dead mens Souls*, which they made to be *Mediators* to the *Gods*, and variouſly called them *Lemures*, *Lares*, *Manes*, *Larvæ*, ſome of which (if they were the Souls of their friends) they fancied, ſtayed about their Houſes and Dwellings for their protection; others were more at Large; ſome were *good Dæmons* and *above*: Others *Infernal* and *Below*, as appears by that of the *Poet.*

——— *Vos O mihi Manes*
Eſte Boni, quoniam ſuperis Averſa voluntas.

Whence came all this, but from an obſcure confuſed notion of mens exiſtence after this Life, and a belief of the *Souls Immortality*?

In the ſecond place, more *expreſſly* and *explicitly*, from the Judgment of ſome particular perſons amongſt them, who have uttered here and there ſome fragments of *Truth*, and have ſometimes ſpoken in juſtification of theſe

these *Main Points*. So *Plato* and others have spoken somewhat of *One God* (Though it ought to be noted that the Being of *One God* was never generally and distinctly acknowledged in any *Heathen Country*, nor was there ever a *Law* made in any *Heathen State* to establish the Being and Worship of *one God*. Nay, some have supposed that no particular *Person* did ever purely by *Natural Light*, determine that there was *but one God*: But that such who have spoken of it had it from a *Tradition* originated in *Revelation*. So says a Learned *Author* in reproch of the *Grecian* and *Romane* Learning, *That setting aside what they learnt out of Egypt, they could never, by themselves, determine whether there were many Gods or but One*) *Cicero*, *Plutarch*, and others, have spoken fully about *Providence*, and others of them have said much to justifie the souls *Immortality*; so much has been acknowledged in the *Heathen World*, that the sparks of Divine Truth, though under much Rubbish, have been there secretly kept alive, and so much as does sufficiently assure us that the great *Fundamentals* of the *Christian Profession* are most *Suitable* to the *Rational Nature*, do only *Rectify* its *Depravations*, and have been some way witnessed unto, in the *darkest times*; And to that end we often make use of their

Testi-

Teſtimony. But 'tis not imaginable that God ſhould leave the world without any *further diſcovery* of himſelf their chiefeſt good, or any further direction toward an eternal happineſs which is mans chiefeſt end, then what we find the world (without *Revelation*) has attained to: Nor can there be a ſtronger evidence of the neceſſity of *ſome Revelation*, then the condition the world has been in without it. The whole of the *Heathen Divinity* having been, ſome way or other, tainted, and is reducible to one of theſe three heads, either *erroneous*, *uncertain*, or *imperfect*. Moſt of it *erroneous*, much of it *uncertain*, but all of it *imperfect*.

If we enquire how mankind came to be *benighted* as they have been in theſe things of greateſt concernment, How ſuch a flood of *Idolatry* and *Superſtition* came to overflow the Gentile-world! Two things ought to be conſidered in order to the ſatisfaction of ſuch an enquiry. Firſt, the *Internal Cauſe* of it, And ſecondly, the *External Means* by which it hath been brought about. The *Internal Cauſe* of it hath layn in two things. Firſt, An *Inſufficiency* in our *Natural Abilities*, ſince the *Fall*, to aſcertain us fully about Divine things, and to give a ſatisfying anſwer to all thoſe enquiries we naturally make about them;

them; Secondly, the general ill *improvement* the world has made of those abilites it had, and the universal *Declension* and *Apostacy* of mankind from that knowledg they might have arrived at. For the first, Though the Being of God and the existence of a Supreme Power be witnessed to, by every mans Reason, and every man be born with a relation to somewhat *Above* him, and there be many Maximes of Natural Divinty connate to the true exercise of our rational faculties, yet there be two things can never be attained by any Natural search. First, A certain knowledg *what God is*! And Secondly a certain knowledg *How he is to be Served*! Neither a Satisfying account of the Nature of his Being, nor of a Worship acceptable to him, is to be compassed, without *Revelation*. About these two things, when men have had nothing told them from Heaven to fix them, their *Opinions* have been as *various* as their *Inventions*. The grosser part of the world (God being onely an *Intellectual* Object, whom they could not *see*) generally fell to conceive of him by what they *did see*. *Cicero* himself confessing that when we come to consider *Qualis sit Deorum Natura, Nihil est difficilius quam a consuetudine oculorum, aciem mentis abducere. Lib.* 2. *de Nat. Deor.* And the

the more Refined part loſt themſelves in a Wilderneſs of Abſtracted Speculations about what they could never diſtinctly comprehend. For the Second, 'Tis plain, a great part of the Heathen Idolatry aroſe, not only from their *Miſtakes* in what they *could not* know, but from a *corrupt defection* from what they *might* know. Thoſe Notices their own natural abilities gave them of God, thwarting their Senſual Inclinations, they delighted not to retain *ſuch* a knowledg of God in their minds, but willingly turned aſide to Deluſion, leſt the guide of their Reaſon, and choſe the conduct of *Appetite*. The Stupendious folly of their Religions, is as a Thouſand witneſſes to this Truth, That they lived not only below the true *Knowledg* of the *one God*, but farr beneath the exerciſe of *Right Reaſon*. For though I am apt to believe that a *Supernatural* knowledg does much inſtruct us in the true extent of what is meerly Natural, and does much inkindle our natural Light, and we ſee many things *now* to be attainable by Nature, which the world (ſo farr as I can diſcerne) never found out without Revelation. Yet 'tis not credible that a Rational Being (without ſome way extinguiſhing the dictates of his own faculty) ſhould make a *God* of that which he himſelf knew to be but

a *Perishing Creature*, or should think to please a *being* of such perfections as every mans Reason must needs ascribe to *God*, by debasing himself before the *Meanest parts* of the *World*.

Secondly, If we consider the *External means* by which these Internal Causes have *operated*, and how all that Rubbish of *Pagan Theology* hath been visibly induced to defile and cumber the world, from five things chiefly we may derive it. First, From a corrupt Tradition of the Worlds first *original*, and the History of the *Creation*, and the *Flood*, and many passages both before and after the Flood, which *Noah* and his family first conveyed down to the world in its Repeopling, and the *Jews* from *Moses* afterward inform'd them off. This appears to have been a great rise to many of the *Heathen Superstitions* and *Vanities*, and most especially amongst the *Phœnicians*, much of whose *Religion* seems to be a plain *corruption* of those *original Truths*, and an apparent *Mythology* upon the *True History* of things before and after the *Flood*, as appears by *Diodorus Siculus*, and more anciently by their own famous *Antiquary Sanconiathon*, in the *Version* of *Philo Biblius*. The occasion of which corruption in the Tradition of those things was, probably, the *Confusion* of *Tongues* at

at first, the great increase of *Barbarisme* after, the proud desire every Nation had to apply all Traditional Stories of famous persons to some of themselves; with many other Reasons which *Scaliger*, *Bochart*, and other Learned men give for it. Secondly, From the *Fictions* of the *Poets*, who 'tis clear, were the first beginners of all the *Græcian Learning*, and were therefore anciently called in *Græce* διδάσκαλοι *Teachers*, and as *Strabo* says (and I think, upon very good grounds) were also the first beginners of all the ancientest Learning every where. All other *Speech*, whether *Historical* or *Rhetorical*, being but the progeny of *Poetry*, the Ancients knowing no other artificial or set form of speech but what was in *Verse*; and therefore, as the same Author saies, *Poetry* was anciently called *Prima quædam Philosophia*. These fill'd the World with innumerable Fables, *Mythologized* upon every thing, and did greatly promote their *Theological Vanities* and the *Corruption* of all true *Story*. Thirdly, From the wild Speculations and multiplied *Theories* of the *Philosophers* (of whom there were some hundreds of *Sects*) which served greatly to *Puzzle* and *Mis-lead* men. There being, as *Cicero* saies, no *Absurdity* but had some *Philosopher* for its *Patron*. Fourthly, From their *Oracles*, by which the world lay

subjected to all *Diabolical deluſions*. And fifthly, from their *corrupt Legiſlators*, ſuch as *Numa* in *Rome*, and others, who finding the World *Sequacious* in point of *Religion*, and Mankind apt to *adore* every *fiction*, impoſed upon their belief whatever they thought moſt conducing to their own *Politick Ends*.

Nor has the World without *Revelation*, been free from defects in its *Morals*, though Men attained far therein, and their *Morality* much outwent their *Divinity*. *Cicero* wrought with much better ſucceſs *de Officiis*, then he he did *de Nat. Deorum*, yet the *Bible* has greatly improved the world *herein*. Let any man extract the moſt exact *Scheme* he can of *Morality* out of the beſt *Philoſophers*, and the *acuteſt Moraliſts*, and compare it with the Doctrine the *Bible* propoſeth to us about thoſe things, and the defects of it will be viſible. *Amiraldus* obſerves in his Treatiſe of *Religions*, *That ſcarce can there be found any Common-Wealth amongſt thoſe which have been eſteemed the beſt policyed, in which ſome Grand and Signal Vice has not been excuſed, or permitted, or even ſometimes recommended by publick Laws.* *Plato* makes a *Community of Women*, one of the fundamental *Conſtitutions* of his *Republick*. *Socrates* and *Cato* I think are agreed to be two

as

as famous Moraliſts as ever were in *Græce* or in *Rome*. *Cato* the great exemplar for Virtue and Juſtice amongſt the *Romans*, and *Socrates* the *Phœnix* of *Græce* for Virtue and Piety, of whom *Xenophon* gives this admirable account in his Book *De* Socratis *memorabilibus dictis*, *Nemo autem unquam* Socratem *impium quiddam & irreligioſum aut facere vidit, aut dicere audivit. No man ever heard* Socrate *ſpeak, or ever ſaw him do a wicked and irreligious thing* (that is, according to the conceptions they then had of thoſe things) Himſelf the firſt Author of *Ethicks*, and the firſt that contemned the fruitleſs Speculations of the *Philoſophers* about other things, and reduced Men to the Doctrines of *Morality*: So ſayes *Laertius* of him, *Animadvertens autem naturalis ſpeculationis, fructum nullum eſſe, eamq; ad officia vitæ nihil eſſe neceſſariam, invenit primus Ethicen deq; illa & in Officijs, & in Publico, quotidie Philoſophans, ea potius inquirendo hortabatur, quæ mores inſtituerent, & quorum uſus domi eſſet neceſſarius.* Yet theſe two famous *Vertuoſo's* were no better principled in Morality, but that they could part with their Wives unto others, for their own advantage. And therefore *Tertullian* in his Apology, cries out in deriſion of them, *O famous example of a* Græcians *Wiſdom and* Roman *Severity!*

A Philosopher and a Censor make a shameful Trade of their wives Chastity. Aristotle and *Cicero* both commend Revenge as a Laudable part of Magnanimity. *Self-murder* in many cases, was generally allowed off by the best of their *Casuists*. One thing of great worth in it self, and of most general use amongst Mankind, we are upon the matter wholly obliged to Divine Revelation for; That excellent Virtue of Humility has not a footstep to be found amongst them: nor is there a word of true *Self-denial* in their best *Ethicks*. Nay, the contrary Vice had a share with their Virtues. Pride and Self-esteem was a disease Epidemical amongst them, and seems wholly incurable by any notions they had. Some arrived to that impudence to compare themselves with, nay, prefer themselves before their own gods. 'Twas either a horrible folly to Deifie what they *Postponed* to their own Self-estimation, or else 'twas a stupendious effect of their Pride to prefer themselves before the gods they Worshipped. Never any man amongst them proposed the Honour of their own Gods, as the chief end of their Actions, nor so much as dreamt of any such thing; 'Tis Evident the best of them in their best Actions, reflected still back to themselves, and determinated there; designed to set up a Pillar, to exalt their

their own fame & reputation, & to bring home a large Revenue of Glory and esteem to their own names: especially before the Gospel was extant, from the light of which 'tis probable even the Heathen Philosophers themselves did in many things rectifie their Morals in after times.

Nor is it unworthy our notice, upon how much safer and surer foundations the power of Princes and Magistrates is established by the Doctrine of the Scriptures, then what we find it was by any other Laws. With what positive indispensable strictness is mens subjection to Authority commanded! Not the least allowance for any Opposition to be made by private men against their Superiours. The worst Princes have a just claim to our submission; when we cannot actually *obey*, we are positively obliged quietly to *suffer*. We find the World governed by much looser Principles amongst the best of the Heathen, and Authority exercised upon much *unsafer* terms. 'Twas ordinary with them to *rebel* against Authority, if they thought it not well exercised; and to lay violent hands upon such as they had a mind to call *tyrants* and *invaders* of the Peoples liberties. Nothing more frequent in their Writings then the highest *Encomiums* of those that *murdered* and *assassinated* men in highest Authority. And nothing

more common in their *Cities*, then the *Statues* of such to perpetuate their Memory. What superlative praises of those that slew the *Tyrants* of *Thebes* are transferred to posterity! Nay, that odious and detestable murder of *Julius Cæsar* is so justified and applauded by *Cicero* himself, as if *Brutus* and his *Complices* had been sent from the Gods to do it; and yet in truth scarce did the *Sun* ever afford its light to a viler Action, and the *Sequel* of it sufficiently testified Gods high displeasure with such a *Barbarous Assassination*: for the people of *Rome* in general exchanged their Condition from *better* to much *worse*, and by the *absoluteness* and *severity* of three or four *sharp Masters*, felt an *oppression* far beyond even the most popular complaints of that kind against *Cæsar*. And for the *Murderers* themselves, it fared much with them as it did with the accusers of *Socrates*. Every one of them came to an untimely and remarkable End: And some of them (as the antients have been curious to observe) slew themselves with the very same Swords wherewith they had assaulted him, and became their own Executioners with those individual weapons, by which they effected their malice against his noble person. The Laws of the Gospel greatly heighten the attainments of the World in these things. All

revenge

revenge amongst private persons is there wholly exploded, much more against such as are clothed with authority. The Gospel bids us *Pray for them that persecute us and despightfully use us, and subject our selves to Authority*, not only for fear, and out of Interest, *but also for Conscience sake*, And this Doctrine the Apostles themselves made good in their own *Practice*, while they lived under that Monster *Nero*, the worst of *Emperours*, and the vilest of *Men*.

The whole of these things point us to the reasonable expectation of that we are in quest of, which is some *supernatural Revelation*. All men have turned *Banquerupts* upon those first natural stores God intrusted them with. 'Tis necessary to set up anew upon the stock of *Revelation*. Nothing can be more pregnantly urged to shew the necessity of it, then that the *best* and most knowing persons of the World, who have ransacked all the corners of Nature, and seem to have set a Copy for succeeding Ages to write after, in most *Humane attainments*, have been so far from discovering the certain tracks to an *Eternal happiness*, that they were never yet able to frame such a *Religion* as could reasonably satisfie others, or convince the wisest of themselves, or much less upon any good ground be supposed to find any acceptance with the *true God*. In what strange

strange mists of Religious Ignorance and folly did those knowing Ages of the world breath out themselves and expire! making the *meanest Creatures* their *Gods*, and ascribing the *vilest qualities* of the *worst* men to their *Deities*! Loosing themselves in a wilderness of *vain Worship*, to *She Gods*, *Wicked Gods*, *Feigned Gods*, *Senseless Gods*, *Many Gods*; How do these things point us to the *Necessity* of the *Bible*, to put an end to the foolish Fancies and Inventions of Men! that what man, since the fall, could not find out, or had lost the knowledg of, *God* might acquaint him with, and at once discover to him all those admirable *Topicks* of *Divine Knowledge* which the *Scriptures* contain, and give him a clear and distinct account how the World came first to be made! and of those Methods by which Mankind came since to be *saved*, things beyond all natural kenn, and which only served to reproch the wisest thoughts, and to tell men how little they could discover of what they were most concerned to know. *Moses* having told us more in *two Pages* then the whole World ever discovered by the utmost of all *Humane search*. Nor has the world any way improved it self in this kind of Sience to this day. However men by *experience* and *industry*, have *meliorated* the condition of Humane Affairs in *other* things,

things, whatever advance they have made in Natural Theories, or in any *Mechanick* contrivance, whatever Ruſt of Errour or Ignorance that ſtuck to former Ages, may be worne off, by an improvement of Natural Speculation in this, yet where the Scriptures are either not *Known* or *Rejected*, they are at the ſame Loſs in point of *Divinity*, they are as Ignorant of the *True God* as ever. And the Reſult of all *Natural Theology* (without the help of ſome *Revelation*) has been, and ſtill is, no other then this, That while men have been moſt buſily contemplating the nature of an *Infinite Being*, and contriving Ways to gain Acceptance with him, they have Loſt themſelves in the Crowd of their own vain Imaginations.

Secondly, Such have been the Principles and Practices of all Nations in all ages, that it evidently appears, The world, men themſelves, have generally found and acknowledged a *Neceſſity* of *Revelation*; and out of an experimental ſenſe of their own Impotency without it, have ſtill lived in *expectation* of *ſomewhat Supernatural* to be *Revealed* from *Above*. Mankind, ſince the Fall, have been ſtill liſtening after ſome further diſcovery of God then what the Work of his hands does afford them, and ſome more perſpicuous Notices

tices of his pleasure then what their own Natural Abilities could dictate to them, as that which *Gods goodness* and his own *excellent Nature* seemed to promise to the World, and mans natural Tendency to some Supernatural happiness (as the great end of his being) continually call'd for. The *Genius* of the World has been so suited to the notion of *Revelation*, and mens thoughts have been so constantly taken up with an *Expectancy* of some *Divine Instruction*, that they have been still in danger to fall into all the extreams of deluding *Enthusiasme*. Not only their *Religion* but whatever else they thought well off, they were ready to Father it still upon *Revelation*. Scarce was there a *Mechanick Invention* but they ascribed it to a *Discovery* made by the *Gods*. *Pythagoras* when he had found out an excellent Demonstration in *Geometry*, sacrificed a hundred Oxen in gratitude to the *Gods* who had favoured him with such a *Discovery*. Whatever was in it self *difficult*, or *Excellent*, they imputed the Accomplishment of it to a *Supernatural Power*. *Homer* (the great Oracle of the Heathen Divinity) not only ascribes to the *gods* the Invention of all abstruse matters; and all the Heroical motions of the mind; but referrs our *Ordinary Cogitations* to *Divine Impulses*.

Τοῖόν γὰρ νοὸς ἔσιν ἐπιχθονίων ἀνθρώπων,
Οἷον ἐπ' ἦμαρ ἄγησι πατὴρ ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε
Talis nempe mens est Terram incolentium hominum.
Qualem in dies indit pater hominumq; Deumq;.

And his Book is filled throughout with Enthusiastick Advertisements directed to Men from the *Gods*. *Cicero*, in the end of his 2. Book, *De Nat. Deor.* is large in his expression this way. *Nec unquam Magnus vir sine aliquo Afflatu Divino. Never was there any great Man* (sayes he) *without some —— Inspiration.* Not only were the *Poets* (who seem to be the *Divines* of the *Pagans*, and the *Priests* of their *Mysteries*) all *Inspired Men*; but not an eminent Physician or a Souldier was there among them, nor a Man any way *excellent*, but they derived his Abilities from some *Supernatural Gift*, and thought his *Qualities* from *Above*. *Socrates* that excellent person often says, That virtue and Religion are not things to be learnt as Arts and Sciences are; but to be had by inspiration, being Divine and Heavenly gifts. He avowed himself raised up by *God* to *Philosophize*, and by his *Precepts* to *Reforme* the *Athenian manners*: And, when condemned to dye, and sentenced to the Poisonous Cup, Reso-

Resolutely protested, Though the Prisondores should be opened to him, with an injunction never more to *Philosophize*, he would wholly refuse his Liberty upon those Termes, and would chose to obey *God* rather then *Men*. We read not of an eminent *Legislator* in a *Commonwealth* but pretended he received his Laws from the *gods*. *Solon's* Laws were said to come from *Minerva*: *Lycurgus* derived his Laws from *Jupiter*. And much more was their *Religion* and the *Rites* thereof still fathered upon some *Deitie* or other, and handed down to the world with a *Supernatural Stamp*. *Numa Pompilius*, the first founder of the *Romane Ceremonies*, declared he received them from the *Goddess Egeria*. No Religion in any Nation but has made some pretence to Revelation. That absurd Impostor *Mahomet* was wise enough to father his *Medley Divinity* and all the confused trash of his *Alchoran* upon *Revelation*. Nothing else could have cheated so many into a belief of such a *Religion*, but that they were first perswaded it came from *Above*, and that *Mahomet* had it *Revealed* to him from *Heaven*. The Heathen world were, in *Truth*, *without* any *Revelation* in Religious affairs, that is, They had no Divine Laws given them from Heaven to direct their Religious obedience (Whether it pleased God to Reveal any particular

ticular matters, at any time, to any of them, I dispute not; *But He gave his Statutes, his Divine Laws, to Israel, and he did not deal so with any Nation besides*) And yet nothing more general then the *expectation* of it, and nothing more common then *Pretensions* to it. This seems to have been a Catholick *Maxime, that the true knowledge of the Deity, and the right way of serving him, must be revealed from Above.* All the Nations of the Earth seem to have concenter'd in this belief, that *Divine Revelation, and a Supernatural intercourse between God and Man was necessary, for the present and future good of Mankind.* 'Tis well expressed by the Learned *Camero, Omnium Gentium etiam Barbararum consensu receptum est, ut homini bene sit, prater eam Rationem quam nimis magnifico & superbo Titulo vitæ Ducem vocant, requiri Cœlestem quandam Sapientiam; inde Nata est Religio, Ritus, Cerimoniæ, quæ sola Sanctitate se commendant. Prælect. de Verb. Dei.* 'Tis a thing (says he) *agreed to, by the consent of all Nations, yea the most Barbarous, that in order to mans well being, there should be a heavenly Wisdome to direct him, besides the guide of his own Reason, and from thence comes Religion,* &c. 'Twas from this General apprehension that the World came to be so often and so easily imposed upon by *deluding*

luding pretensions to inspiration, and the many gross Cheats of *Enthusiasme*, the greatest *Impostors* still setting up for *Enthusiasts*. 'Twas upon this account that the Heathen parts of the World were so enslaved to their *Oracles*, and did so greedily embrace whatever they thought came from *above*. The truth is, there is in every man not besotted with sensuality, and brutishly degenerated, an earnest thirst after the *knowledg* of *God* and *Supernatural things*. And there is as clear a Conviction upon every Reasonable man, that without some further discovery from *God himself*, then what this World and our own contemplations thereupon will afford us, no satisfying account of those things can be attained.

Thirdly. *Man* is a *Creature designed* by his own *Faculties* for a *Converse* with the *Diety*, and by *Natural Obligation*, *Tends* to an Intercourse with *God*; To serve him acceptably, and to pay the Homage due from us, in such away as we may be fully ascertained is pleasing to him, and will be rewarded by him, is absolutely necessary to all humane welfare. That is, The greatest concern we have in this world, is to be fully instructed about Divine Worship. And this seems no way attainable without some *Revelation*. That God is, and that he is to be *Served*, my *Reason* will tell me; But

What

what he is! and after what *Manner* he Exists (the knowledge whereof is indispensibly necessary, in all our Approches to him, as that without which we shall be sure to Debase his Excellency, and to represent to our selves some vain *Idæa's*, and *Fantasmes* of our own *imagination*) I must be taught from *above*. And for the *manner how* he is to be served, and what will be acceptable to him therein, I must look *upward*, and expect a full and compleat direction from thence. Mankind seem, *unâ voce*, to have concenter'd in this, as a thing most fit, yea necessary, that God should from Heaven *reveal* to us the *way* of his own *Worship*, and *Teach* us the *Methods* of our *Converse with Him*. Where can we find a Religion in any Nation, not founded upon some *Pretences* to *Revelation*, and established upon this Admission? 'Twere indeed a most irrational thing, and a great Indignity offered to the Supreme Majesty to make Men their own *Judges* in that case, and to suppose it left to the *Arbitrary Determinations* of *Humane Discretion*, How God should be *worshipped*! The consideration of the *Wisdome* and *Sovereignty* of *God*, and our own *Dependance* upon him, is singly sufficient to evince this Truth, that we ought to be under a *Law*, and a *Stated Rule* for the *Manner* of our *Serving* of him, With-

out which we can never intitle the best of our Services to *Obedience*, or, upon any good Grounds, be secured of *Acceptance*. Nor ought we to judge that any Worship ever found *favour* with *God* that had not the stamp of his own *Command*, and was not by himself, some way or other, *Appointed*. Though 'tis fit to believe that God was well pleased with the *Moral goodness* of the Heathen world, and any real conformity there was amongst them to that *Natural Divinity* that is originally annexed to every mans Being, and greatly displeased with the contrary, and rewarded and punished them upon their Good and Ill behaviour in those things, yet tis not to be doubted, but that the whole of their own *contrived Worship*, with all the *Rites* and *Ceremonies* of it, was a thing to God most *Odious* and *Detestable*. And of this we are well assured, not only from the Reason of the thing considered in it self, but from a very Authentick Determination that tells us *The whole of that Worship was a Service performed to Devils*. Nor could any the best *Intentions* that any men ever yet had since the world began, sufficiently excuse for *Will-worship* and *Idolatry*. There are but two ways by which any worship can be *appointed* by *God*. Either by a Law *Natural*, given to us in our first Constitution, or by some

ſome *Revealed* Laws ſince. The Foundation of all Worſhip muſt be either in *Nature*, or *Inſtitution*. The Point then to be proved will be this, That God has not by any *Natural Laws*, given to Mankind a ſufficient direction about his Worſhip, and that Intercourſe between Himſelf and the World, that (reſpecting either his own Honour or mans Happineſs) is neceſſary to be maintained, and all mankind naturally tend to: But has left us to expect it in a *Supernatural way*. That God, by a Law Natural, binds us to acknowledg his Being, and has given us ſufficient notices of it in General, and binds us to acknowledg that there is an *Honour* and *Worſhip* due to his *Being*, and has given us ſome General Innate directions about the performance of it, I grant: And has alſo obliged us to Live according to the Dictates of our Rational Nature (which ſhews to us Good and Evil) by that very Nature which becomes Obligatory to it ſelf; In theſe things, our own *Reaſon* is our *Law*, and according to that Law, men without *Revelation* are *Rewarded* and *Puniſhed*: And ſo I doubt not but all the Heathen Nations were. But the Laws of Nature, the dictates of the beſt Reaſon, are not intruſted with ſuch a plenary direction about *Worſhip* as 'tis neceſſary for us to have, and we

all tend to; Nor can any man be a sufficient Law to himself in those things. And that may be thus made to appear.

All Worship must either be confined to *Words*, *Thoughts*, and *Bodily Gestures*, and simply Terminated there; or else it must be extended to some further expressions of Service, by an Appropriation of some *other Mediums* unto it. First, No part of the World have ever yet thought it a thing Reasonable, that God should be no otherwise served then by Thoughts, Gestures, and Words. Both the Principles and Practices of all Nations have, in all times, declared the contrary. Nor has any Worship, in any Place, been established, or such a constitution framed as that we call *Religion*, without some other expressions of service, and some other External *Mediums* appropriated to it. And this seems to have arisen from two things. First, Men have never supposed their Words, or their Thoughts, or their Gestures, to be alone, a sufficient expression of that Homage they are naturally sensible they owe to the Greatness and Bounty of God, for their own Beings, and the Donation of this world, which he has visibly bestowed upon Man, in making the Whole in a subserviency to Him, and giving him the plenary and quiet possession of it; But they still thought

thought themſelves bound to a further expreſſion of Gratitude and Subjection. Secondly, Mankind in every Age have applied to God under a ſenſe of *Sin*, and of *Guilt* contracted by it, and upon that account, have ſtill adjudged it as neceſſary to make ſome further *Offering* to God for their ſins, and by ſome other *Mediums* then bare Thoughts and naked Expreſſions, to apply to Him about them. No man ever yet imagined ſuch a ſervice a ſufficient *Compenſation* for *Sin*, but have ſtill attempted a further *Satisfaction* to the *Juſtice above*, and by ſome other ways have indeavoured to *appeaſe Divine Anger*. Now, the Reaſon of the world does not iſſue it ſelf into any poſitive *Certainty* about *ſuch* things, as it does about things in themſelves *Morally Good* and *Morally Evil*. No mans Reaſon determines about the poſitive Uſe of any ſuch *Outward Mediums* of *Worſhip*, nor can aſſure me of Gods diſtinguiſhing *Acceptance*, in any of them (And, to be upon certain grounds of Acceptance with God, is the chief thing in all our VVorſhip) Nor is any man by Nature, a clear and certain Law to himſelf about ſuch things; Nor is it poſſible he ſhould; Becauſe there is no Intrinſically Religious Good, as to matter of Worſhip, in any parts of the world, but all ſuch goodneſs reſults purely from *Inſtitution*. God

has not sanctified any part of the Creation to his Service in such a way by any unalterable obligation arising from the Rational Nature. No such External Mediums of Worship are founded in *Reason*, but all in *Institution*. 'Tis true, the Light of Nature will direct me to that behaviour of my self in the performance of all Worship, which I think most Decent and Reverent, But for any External Mediums of Worship, the Light of Nature will give me no certain Direction at all. If any parts of the World be to be made use of in Worship (as by the judgment of God himself, and the practice of the whole world, it has been declared Necessary that some should be) we must then, both for the *Choice* and the *use*, of such parts of the World, be wholly guided and steered by *Revelation*. And the truth is, every mans own Reason is Impregnated with Obligations to a further *Degree* of Worship and Divine Homage, then *Reason* it self is able to be a Safe and a Certain guide to us in, and directs us to many Duties which we want *Revelation* to teach us how to performe. Which has, in all Ages, made the world so inquisitive after it, and shews us how Rationally we tend Upward in this matter, and how greatly our own Natures prepare us to expect and receive *Instructions* from *Above*.

Secondly,

Secondly, Should this be admitted, that Divine Worſhip might be confined ſimply to Thoughts, Geſtures, and Words, yet would not our natural light inable us to acquit our ſelves as we ought in this matter, nor well to perform ſuch a ſervice as that, without ſupernatural help. There be two great ends of all worſhip, which though inſeparable in their attainment, are yet diſtinct in their application, and if not attained, the whole of mens attempts that way will prove altogether uſeleſs and fruitleſs. Firſt, in a right manner to give to God the *Honour* due from us to him. And Secondly, to provide ſufficiently for our own *welfare*, by an *acceptance* with him. For the Firſt, how can we Honour God, with the Honour due to him, unleſs we have a right *Knowledge* of him, and ſuch a diſcovery of his Being as may fully inform and aſcertain our minds about him; which we never can have, nor to this day the World never had, without *Revelation*. 'Tis impoſſible to Honour God as we ought, unleſs (according to our meaſure) we know him as in truth he is; and 'tis equally impoſſible to know what God is, unleſs it be told us by himſelf. 'Tis not ſimply ſufficient to *Capacitate* me for a due addreſs to the Deity to know in the general that there is a Supreme Wiſdom, and Ju-

stice, and Power above me, that some way or other exists (which is all my Reason will tell me) but I must have some *direct* and *distinct* Knowledge of that Being, wherein all those Attributes do exist: Upon which, as the Object of my Worship, my mind may terminate, and without which I shall be sure to form an *Idol* to my self in the room of that *Being*, and then apply those Attributes to *It*. To which fatal mistake and Idolatrous delusion the World (having by Nature, no certain account what God was, nor after what manner the Deity did exist) in all Ages, has been too apparently subject. Secondly, how can we sufficiently provide for our own welfare, unless we can be safely assured of the forgiveness of sin, and the total removal of natural guilt? And how is it possible to be so assured, unless we knew the *Terms* of Gods forgiveness, and the *Means* of our Reconciliation, to him? Of which we have no certain satisfying account given us by any dictates of Nature, nor can they ever be found out, until they be told us from above. Men must needs make strange *Prayers*, and have very wild and uncertain *Meditations* about God and their own Conditions, that were benighted with Ignorance in such things. *Prayer* and whatever else is it self a part of Natural worship, would be

be very *lamely* performed, without ſome Revelation to guide it. The *Pagan devotion* was a *medley of ſtrange Sentiments* founded in horrible Ignorance of God, and of their own Condition, and the way of mans Reſtoration. Had *Plato* or *Ariſtotle* or the wiſeſt amongſt them but left us a *Liturgy* of their own Compoſition, it would with great effect have convinced us what neceſſity there is of ſome *Revelation* to guide even the beſt underſtandings in all Divine addreſſes.

Two things about Worſhip, the practice of the Heathen World has taught us, beyond all reaſonable denial. Firſt, that Mankind have generally acknowledged it neceſſary that ſome *Supernatural direction* ſhould be given for the manage of that intercourſe that ought to be between God and Man, and have ſubſcribed to the ſhortneſs and defficiency of *Humane Wiſdom* about it. And Secondly, that there is no one certain compleat *Syſteme* of Worſhip, that by the light of Nature, Men do uniformly agree in. The one reſults from their conſtant recourſe to *Supernatural enquiries*, and the many *Enthuſiaſtick* pretenſions thereupon. The other, from their great and eminent *diſagreement* amongſt themſelves; for the Pagan world, who were only under the conduct of Natural light (and had, in truth, no

no Revelation at all, but were still abused with the *counterfeit* of it) fell by that guidance into endless diversity in practice, and into a numberless variety of opinions, about the right way of serving and approching the *Deity*, and were universally engaged in multiplied Mediums and Methods of worship, no way prescribed by any Natural Law connate with Mens beings, or any general uniform issues of right Reason; nor indeed were they under any direction at all, either for their Choise, or their Use, further then what their own *fancies* or best *guesses*, or some *Enthusiastick* Impostors could suggest to them; which plainly declares, there is not an ability in Nature sufficiently to guide Men in *Divine worship*, so far as their own devotions do naturally Steer them.

And we that *indeed* have *Revelation*, are instructed by that *Revelation* it self, sufficiently to know the necessity there is of *Revelation*. For we find that God, by his *revealed Laws*, does not only *revive* in general the whole of *Natures Laws* about worship, and instruct us in the true *Extent* thereof, which he does, and much inlightens our natural Knowledge therein (which we find was greatly defective, even about Natural Duty) and gives us a compleat view of our Natural Obligations to him, and

and teaches us in a due manner, how to perform the Duties of *Nature*; he does not only do this, not only *rectifie*, but far exceed all natural dictates of worſhip, and induceth much into his ſervice that receives its Virtue and worth ſingly from *Inſtitution*, and no otherwiſe. Never ſince Man was firſt made, has God left him ſingly to the Natural Laws of his own Being, for the payment of that Homage he owes him. Even to *Adam* in his Innocent ſtate, God thought fit to give a *Law Supernatural*. A Law which for the matter of it, had no foundation at all in *Adams Nature*, further then that he was by his own nature generally obliged to do whatſoever God required of him. Much more may we expect it ſince the fall, the whole Method of our Recovery being *Supernatural*. Nor is it fit to be thought that God (who has made man not only under an Obligation to the performance of all moral goodneſs; but has alſo implanted in his Being a deſire of a peculiar and ſupernatural converſe with him, and given him ſuch noble faculties ſo capable of it) ſhould not promulge ſome particular Laws by which he might receive a full and ſatisfying direction for the attainment of it, or indeed, that God ſhould not direct men to the furtheſt approches they were able to make toward him,

and

and glorifie himself by appointing a way to the utmost Homage and Service their rational Beings are capable of.

Fourthly, Some things most essentially necessary to the Being of all Religion, and to the present and future good of Mankind, are not *discoverable* but by *Revelation*. And 'twere a barbarous conception to think that God should leave the World wholly in the dark about those matters wherein their greatest *concernments* lie. I will not speak particularly of the Nature of God, how indiscoverable it is without Revelation, and yet how *necessary* to be known (according to our capacity) in order to all true worship; Mens Ignorance in that particular having evidently been the root of all *Polytheisme* and *Idolatry*, nor what marvelous dark, absurd, yea, prophane, and blasphemous conceptions the World had of it, without Revelation! Nor will I speak further of the Worlds Original, how useful and necessary the Knowledge of it is to us, to be truly informed how our selves and all things else came first to exist! What marvellous instruction to our selves and what a natural Homage to God results from it! which yet depends purely upon Revelation, and the Knowledg of it is impossible to be attained without it. Nor will I mention those uncertainties the

World

World hath been, and muſt (without Revelation) be ſtill intangled withall about *Death*, to know whether it be a Natural accident! a thing originally appurtenant to Humane Nature, and annexed to our Beings in their firſt conſtitution! or hath been as a puniſhment, or upon ſome other account introduced ſince! and the many difficulties that will ariſe to our meditation either way; nor will I much inſiſt upon that uncertainty we muſt needs be in, about a *future Condition* after this life, unleſs particularly informed therein by *Revelation*. Though my Reaſon will tell me (and it may ſafely be collected from the unequal diſpoſition of rewards and puniſhments here) that there is ſome future eſtate of things beyond this World, without a ſuppoſition of which I muſt either depoſe God from his Government, or elſe admit him unjuſt, both which are abſurd, yet how conducing is it to all true Religion, and how neceſſary for the incouragment of Virtue and the ſupreſſion of Vice to be fully informed about theſe things, and not to be left fluctuating about with every blaſt of uncertain gueſs and conjecture! What wild conceptions had the Heathen world about their Infernal Regions, and their *Eliſian* Fields! Nor were they only fictions peculiar to the Poets, but admitted by their

their *Wisest men*, and best *Philosophers*, who were able to frame very little better *Idea's* of those things. To give one Instance of many, *Plutarch* one of the wisest and best of the Heathens, in the Treatise he wrote upon this *Motto*, λαθὲ βιώσας, gives no better an account of the future state of mens *Souls*, then that the Wicked are only overwhelmed in the perpetual *Oblivion* of all things; And for the Place and Condition of such as shall be happy hereafter, in his *Consolation* directed to *Apollonius*, he adheres to the opinion of *Pindar*, who describes those things in the same Fictious and Ridiculous way that *Virgil* does in the sixth Book of his *Eneiad's*: For *Virgil* does directly imitate *Pindar* therein. *Epicurus* indeed pretended to some Wiser Sentiments; But the end of them was to render all Notion of a Future condition Fabulous, and to *Allegorize* all that was said of another World into this; And to make men believe that whatever was said of the *Sufferings* and *Pains* of the *Infernal Regions*, it was nothing else but what was suffered in *this Life*, by Covetous, Ambitious, and Fearful Minds, Exagitated with their own Exorbitant Passions; Which was a most effectual way to banish out of the World all Fear of Vice, and all Love to Virtue, which even by those Obscure notions they had of a Future

Future State, was much upheld and maintained. But to go farther, How neceſſary muſt we needs grant it, to have the certainty of a Future condition after this Life, eſtabliſhed by *Revelation*, when we conſider how Unfixed ſome of the Wiſeſt have been, about the very Being of any ſuch thing at all! Such men as *Socrates* and *Cicero* were Doubtful and Unreſolved in the caſe, and came to no more but *That they inclined to that opinion, and judged it the more Probable.* And *Ariſtotle* diſcourſed of it with much more Obſcurity. The *Reſurrection* of mens *Bodies* is a thing of farr Harder belief, ſtands in greater need of *Revelation* to credit it. 'Tis not the eaſieſt task to poſſeſs men with a through perſwaſion about *It*, when *'tis revealed.* *Saduciſme* is a weed very apt to grow, and not ſoon *Eradicated.* We find St. *Paul* ſufficiently Laughed at, at *Athens* for Preaching the *Reſurrection.* 'Twas a *New notion* to the *Philoſophers.* And yet if there were any Glimmerings of it amongſt any of the *Philoſophers*, it was amongſt the *Stoicks*, who were one of the Sects he encountered. I know, there have been ſome remote apprehenſions amongſt the *Pagans* tending this way: But neither the *Pagan-world* in General, nor any conſiderable part, nor indeed any part of it at all, ever agreed in

in a positive distinct belief of any such thing. Some fancied there would come to be such a *Revolution* of the Heavens, as that all the *Stars* would be precisely returned to the very exact *Punctum* in which they were when all things began first to be, and that then all that ever had been should return, in Order, Time, and Nature, to their former Condition and Station, and be just as they had been. Some tell us, the *Magi*, who were the *Caldæan Philosophers*, had some obscure notions that all men should, one day *revive*, and become *Immortal*. And some of the *Stoicks* thought the world should be burnt to *Ashes*, and then would follow an immediate *restoration* of all things. But these were but wild and roveing Guesses in general; no certain determination was Mankind able to make about this matter in particular. And yet, of how great use is the assurance of it to all the ends of Virtue and Religion! and how Sovereign a remedy is it against the *terror* of *Death*, which *Aristotle* calls *the terriblest of all Terrors*, to be assured, upon safe grounds, our *Bodies* shall be *raised* again, and all the *Friends* we part with here shall, in their Souls and Bodies Re-united, *Exist* for ever.

But waveing the prosecution of these, there be two things in themselves of absolute ne-

cessity

ceſſity to the being of all Religion, and beyond all poſſibility of a Natural diſcovery, from whence I ſhall endeavour to demonſtrate the neceſſity of a *Revelation*, in order to the preſent and future happineſs of Mankind. First, a certain diſtinct Knowledge how that *Evil* we find in Mankind came firſt to Exiſt! whence the *Corruption* of Humane Nature came! In ſhort, how there came to be ſuch a thing as *Evil* and *Sin* in the World! Secondly, how Sin (and Guilt, ariſing from the Conſcience of it) may be *removed*, and Men brought to a *Reconciliation* with God! and an inward Acqueſcency about it! For the firſt. That there is ſuch a thing as *Evil* and *Sin* in Men, and *Guilt* reſulting from it, needs no proof; every mans own Reaſon determines the Caſe, and the whole tranſaction of the World is too ſad an Evidence of. We find in the Prayers of all Nations a *Confeſſion* of *Sin*: And no worſhip but ſome way or other tending to the *removal* of it; which is a publick proteſt in the Caſe, entered by the whole World againſt themſelves. 'Tis viſible, our Inferiour faculties do combate our Superiour, and our *Wills* over Rule us to that which our own *Reaſons* determine againſt. *Ariſtotle*, in the end of the laſt *Chapter* of his firſt Book of *Ethicks*, confeſſeth *There is ſomewhat in our*

Nature that oppoſeth right Reaſon. Whatever directions the *Philoſophers* and *Moraliſts* gave to *Conquer* our *Paſſions* and *ſubdue* our *Senſual Appetites*, and to conduct us to Virtue, they are all grounded upon this ſuppoſal. *Hierocles*, a Stoical *Philoſopher*, in his Diſcourſe upon the *Golden ſayings* of *Pythagoras*, ſpeaks fully and excellently to this point; His words are theſe. *Man* (ſayes he) *is of his own motion inclined to follow the Evil and leave the Good. There is a certain ſtrife bred in his affections; He hath a free Will, which he abuſeth, binding himſelf wholly to encounter the Laws of God. And this Freedom it ſelf is nothing elſe but a Willingneſs to admit that which is not good, rather then otherwiſe.*

That a certain Knowledge of the *Origine* of this we call *Evil*, and a clear diſcovery of the *firſt riſe* and *Cauſe* of it, is of abſolute neceſſity to the Being of all *Religion*, and that a Man cannot be *Religious* as he ought without it, is eaſily proved, and will be ſufficiently ſo, by a due conſideration of theſe four things. Firſt, how can we acknowledge Gods *Juſtice* in *Puniſhing Mankind*, and without repining *ſubmit* to it as we ought, unleſs we know whence this Evil firſt came! what *Author* it had! and how, and upon what terms man comes to be guilty of that for which

which he is punished! Secondly, how can we be (as we ought to be) *sensible* of Gods general or particular *favours*, and adore his goodness in *preserving* us, and *providing* for us, unless we be rightly informed of our own *demerits* and *rebellion* again him, and that Mankind have *deserved* a total ruine and subversion! which we can never be, unless we know the first entrance of evil, and the original Cause of it. Thirdly, how can we properly address our selves to God to *repair* our *ruines*, unless we perfectly know how the first *breach* came to be made! Lastly, how is it possible, upon reasonable Grounds to restrain Mankind from *Impeaching* the *wisdom*, *Power*, and *Goodness* of God in making and Governing the world, unless we know the first rise and primary Cause of all the disorder we see! which is not to be known till we come to the *Springhead* of evil and sin. With what Impatience did Men use to reproch God and Nature about it, as if there were a kind of *Malevolens* and *ill will* in the Deity to the happiness of Men! One sayes,

Πολλ', ὦ τέκνον Σφάλλουσιν 'ανθρώπους Θεοί.

Another. Ὦ γὰρ 'ἐπεκλώσαιτο Θεοὶ δειλοῖσι βροτοῖσι
Ζώειν ἀχνυμένοις 'τ'τοὶ δέ τ' 'ἀκηδεύς εἰσιν.

And a third. Πολλαῖσι μορφαῖς οἱ Θεοὶ Σοφισμάτων:
Σφείλλουσιν ἡμᾶς κρείττονες πεφυκότες.

Nor indeed can we well blame the disorder of mens minds that contemplate the present posture of the World, and are able to give no satisfying account to themselves, how things came at first so to be!

And that a certain account of evil in its original is impossible to be had without *revelation*, will appear very evident. How should any man ever come to discover whence that internal conflict first arose between the Will and the Judgment! How a man came to be first so divided against himself, one condemning the other! No man naturally knows any thing of its *Causality*, nor more of it then that it is so. How should any man ever find out from whence, or by what means those unruly lusts and passions, those evil and crooked inclinations that naturally infest the minds of men, and are a part of themselves, that create a guilt in mens own Breasts, and prove so ruinous to others, came first to exist? What footsteps are there in Nature to conduct us to the first cause of these things? and the miseries that attend them? something indeed we may say Negatively of the Origine of evil; but we cannot affirm positively the least thing about it. VVe can much less tell how Mankind came to be wicked, then we can tell how

how they came first to be! and yet 'tis impossible to know that, but by *revelation*. 'Tis easie to derive the beings of men in general, from some Supreme maker (though we can never find out the time when, nor the manner how they came first to be made) but we can no way at all imagine from whence to derive the *evil* of their beings, or upon what to father the *Corruption* of humane Nature, nor what *Date* to give it. From a Being infinitely perfect and good, evil it self could not originally come; that is, Men could not at the first be made so. That we may safely say in the Negative to assert mans Apostacy, however any part of the world may dream otherwise; 'tis demonstrable that man is some way or other *degenerated* from his *Primitive state* (from the clear evidence of which, if we duly consider it, results the absolute necessity of a *revelation*) 'Tis impossible *evil* it self should be *Con-created* with him, and be originally appurtenant to him, as part of him. And 'tis thus demonstrable, if man had been at the first made, as now he is, naturally inclined to evil and Vice, had his inclination to evil as well as to that which is good been Created with him, his reason would never have approved the one, and condemned the other; because both natural, and upon equal terms in our

Constitution. To condemn any one part of our original constitution by another, had been in it self not only unnatural and unreasonable, but it had been directly to reproch our maker, and our selves, which nothing Created can be supposed to be so Created as naturally to do. Nature (as 'twas first framed) could never be so divided against it self. A man could never have had any Conscience of evil, nor any remorse for it; nor could any guilt have been contracted by it, had it been (as now it is) part of himself, and at first Created with him. 'Tis not possible a man should judge in himself that to be evil, and repent of it as such, which he acted in prosecution of his first make. There can be no fault in acting suitably to our original frame and composure, nor any punishment due for so doing, in the judgment of a rational Being; because 'tis impossible to do better. All Conscience of evil and sin must necessarily arise from an inward conviction that we are not what we ought to be; which we must needs be if we be as we were first made. VVhenever my Reason tells me I do that which I ought not to do, the same reason will tell me, I am *degenerated*, and do not what I was first made to do; Besides, 'tis utterly impossible that a man should be originally made

Made with *Oppoſite Inclinations*, and an irreconcilable conflict within himſelf (one part condemning another) by a Being that is *Unity* it ſelf in all *goodneſs*, and one and the ſame by an infinite *Identity* in all *Perfection*. We can never, with any common ſenſe, father *Diviſion* upon *Unity*, or that which is *Imperfect* and *Evil* upon that which is *Perfectly Good*, or primarily derive ſuch a *Compoſition* as Man now is from what we know *God* muſt needs be. Nor can we imagine That inherent *Shame* we now find in the nature of Mankind, relating to much of themſelves, could be of the *Same Date* with their firſt *Conſtitution*, or that Man ſhould be at the firſt ſo created as to be naturally *aſhamed* of any part of *Himſelf*, or any thing relative to his own *Being*. 'Twas an *Apoſtacy* from what he once was, muſt needs make him turn aſide and hide himſelf from his own eyes; 'Twas *Evil* and *Guilt* muſt needs be the firſt Authors of *Shame*.

So far we may go in the Negative; What we now *are*, is not what we firſt *were*. But how came the *Change?* Has any ill *Genius*, *Since*, taken up its abode in Humane Nature? And, impoſing upon it, Acted it to all this Evil we See? Is the world under the Tyranny of any *Evil Spirit?* Or, is man-kind degene-

rated by any Necessary *Decay* in the course of Nature? Or, was mans own *Will* the great root of Evill? Came it from a Created *Freedom*? Have men *Wilfully* defaced themselves? If they have, When was it done? What was the first occasion of doing it? Was it done all at *once*? and has it ever since come by *Descent*, and been intailed by a certain *Propagation* upon the world? Or has its entrance been *Gradual*? Were *some* only the first Authors of it? Or has *every* man in every Age had his share in the Conspiracy? In short, If we suppose (which we ought) that Man was Not at first created with an Actual principle of Evil in his breast, Whence could it primarily Arise? And whence should we come to call it *Sin*? and, in the true judgment of Reason, Determine *against* it? It must be grounded upon a mans Relation and Duty to God. All conscience of Evil and Sin which we have in our own Nature, is still with a reference to God, to his Nature, and to his Will, and our Subjection to him. If such a thing then as Evil and Sin (for they are Conjoyned by the Rational Nature) must needs arise from mans Relative Subjection to God, it must be by Opposing and Disobeying his Will revealed by some Law, And that Law must be either Natural or Supernatural;

If

If Natural and Created with him, it must needs be the Dictates of his *Reason:* And 'tis marvellous hard to conceive how Man (while he was intire, and untainted, in the compleat furniture of his first make) should (without some very violent Impressions, or some very strange concurrence of Accidents) go astray from the guide of his own Reason, and transgress such a Law as was the chief Ruling part of himself. Nor are we able to give to our selves the least satisfying account of it. If a Law *Supernatural*; What that Law was! or How, or When, or by Whom Transgressed! we can never discover; Nor so much as make one probable Guess towards it. No man will ever find an Answer to these and many other endless Enquiries, that searches by the Candle-light of *Nature.* Nor is there any one Way-mark set up to direct us. No one thing has so point-blank silenced the whole world in all Ages, as this has done. How miserably involved in their own Confused notions were the *Philosophers* about this matter! Never arriving at the least glimps of truth in the case. Sometimes deriving Evil from the perverseness and malignity of *Matter*, sometimes from I know not what fancyed principle of Discord; Nor could they issue their Doubts at last into any better Resolve, then

then that there were *Two Supreme Beings*, one infinitely *Good*, and the other infinitely *Evil*, equally the Cause of both the principles of Good and Evil. And so were fain to *Canton* the *Deity*, and to put both the Principles upon even termes (which directly overthrows the dictates of all right Reason) to make room for a Solution of this *Problem*. And should we admit such a Cunning contrivance of Nonsense as two contrary *Supremes*, it would but still further Involve us. If a man were so made as he is, How came it to pass that *both the Deities Agreed* in the doing of it, and are yet perfectly *Opposite* and *Contrary* each to other? Did *one* make the *Good* part, and the other the *Ill* part? Or did the *Good* Deity make man *alone*, and the other *Debauch* him and *Un-make* him after? 'Twill not be easy, in a due manner, to *Share* him *Between* them. And if that we naturally call *Evil* came originally, as well as that we call *Good*, from a Being *Eternal* and equally *Supreme*, Why should the *Judgment* of right *Reason* in man be so much *for* the *One*, and directly *against* the *Other*? If it be so, the *Pedigree* of the *One* is no whit *meaner* nor *baser* then the *Other*. Nor is it a thing in it self possible, to annex that we mean by *Evil*, or *Imperfection* from whence it naturally results, to what is *Eternal*,

Be-

becauſe *Eternity* neceſſarily includes *Perfection*, and cannot be reaſonably ſuppoſed without it. In ſuch a diſmal Wilderneſs of Ignorance and Error has Mankind wandered about, whilſt they contemplated theſe things; about which upon any good grounds to be aſcertained is (without *Revelation*) utterly impoſſible; nor can we (whilſt Ignorant of the *Origine* of *Evil*) ever find out the true Reaſon and primary Cauſe of all thoſe *Sorrows* and *Miſeries* we find the World poſſeſſed of. 'Tis true, the *Heathen* were deeply ſenſible of the ruinous and ſad Condition of Humane Nature, and the troubleſome revolutions of the World; ſome to ſo great a degree that they thought, as *Euripides* did, that we ought to weep at the *Birth* of our Children, and to *laugh* our Parents to their Graves; and 'twas uſual with them to fancy Death as a *Preſent* ſent from the *Gods* to the *beſt* men for their *beſt* Actions: So they fancied Death ſent to *Cleobis* and *Biton* for their *Piety* to *Juno*. To *Agamedes* and *Trophonius* for building the Temple at *Delphos*: But they knew nothing how the World *came* into this poſture we find it! either it muſt be a neceſſary conſequent of Nature, or elſe the World is under ſome great *puniſhment* impoſed by the Supreme *Judge* of it. If all we ſee be neceſſary conſequents from *Nature*, we muſt needs

think

think Nature it self to be some very *Imperfect* and *Ill* Composure. We must needs imagine it a wretched constitution at first, that carry'd in its bowels so many dismal misfortunes. Who can suppose God should from the beginning frame this World in the posture we find it? and erect the course of Nature with all those sorrows we see necessarily attending it? We can never reasonably believe things so wrought off their makers hands at first, as that the necessary and natural consequence of them should be their present posture. And if we suppose (as well we may) all the sad and sorrowful accidents, and troublesome vicisitudes of humane life, to come from a *Judgment* since imposed from above; for some *Treason* of which the World has been *attainted*, and some grand piece of *Rebellion* against the great *Sovereign*, how short a Stage will Nature conduct us, in our searches after those things! Who can inform us of the first *Authors* of such a fatal *Treason*? the *Time* and *Occasion* of its Commission? What the *Sentence* was God pronounced when he inflicted these Judgments? How far it *Extended*? VVhether all the other parts of the world be punished for *Mans Transgression*? Or how it came first to pass that they are as we find them? VVhether God will pursue the Execution into the other world?

world! Or whether any Bounds be ſet to its duration here! and the world ſhall ever ſurvive and out-laſt it, and return at length to be in ſo much a better Condition as we may reaſonably conjecture at firſt it was! Theſe and many other neceſſary Queſtions may be *aſked*, but can ever be *reſolved* without *Revelation*.

And as Mankind have been ſtill reproched by their own Ignorance about this matter, being never able to make the leaſt probable gueſs at *the Origine of evil*, nor to aſcend by the *Streams* to the *Fountain* (the Spring-head of natural corruption being as much concealed from the moſt inquiring men, and as much unknown to the wiſeſt parts of the World, as the Fountains of *Nile* were to the ancient *Geographers*) ſo, in the ſecond place men can never (without ſupernatural help) upon good Grounds be aſſured *how to remove that guilt* ingendered by it! the burden of which they continually groan under, as the heavieſt and ſoreſt of all humane preſſures; that is, no man (ſhould he ſtudy over all the Volumes of Nature) unleſs it be told him from *Heaven*, can certainly know upon what *terms* God will proceed in *pardoning* and *puniſhing* the ſins of the World! ſhould a man imagine that God would take no other vengeance upon

mens

mens disobedience, then those temporal judgments he has laid upon them and the World they dwell in? Should a man imagine that God has satisfyed his Justice in Condemning man to *Death*, and Sentencing of him to the *Grave*, and exposing him to those *Sorrows* that attend him thither, and means to go no further? These thoughts will not obliterate mens *Guilt*, nor will such *guesses* at the *Penalty* at all appease the minds of Men when they do *Ill*. Will God have the *first-born* of mens *bodies*, or the *best* of their *Substance*, or what parts of the World to satisfie for their *disobedience*? If we should ransack all the particulars that Humane invention can reach in this kind, we could never be fully assured, that the *Expiation* of mens *Sin* lay in *any*, or in *all* of them. The great concern of the World, and that which Mankind above all other things naturally press after, is a certain Knowledge upon what *terms* they may be *accepted* with *God*! the sense of their own Apostacy, and the Conscience of Divine Justice necessitate it so to be; and with such a Knowledge no natural abilities can supply us. That God is *Just* my Reason will tell me, and that he is *Merciful* my own Breast will assure me; But how he will proceed to deal with men, so as to reconcile *both* these *Attributes*! how far the

one

one shall be *Predominant* over the *other*! or whether they must be in *equal Conjunction*, and *both concur*! and how that can be done! VVhat will *procure Mercy*, or what will *satisfie Justice*, or how they will be made to *meet in one Divine Act*, when both *perfect*, and nothing of either can be *abated*; because not consistent with their perfection! are things utterly impossible to be known without *Revelation*. If God forgive *absolutely* without any *satisfaction*; what becomes of his *Justice*, which should secure and vindicate the Honour of his Laws? And should he only forgive men when they themselves make a *Plenary satisfaction* to Justice, where were his Mercy? And how could such a plenary satisfaction to infinte Justice for mens disobedience be ever *found out*? what *Proxie* can a man make in that case to answer for his sin? VVhat part of the world can be his sufficient substitute? or what can we suppose can satisfie *Divine Justice* for mens transgression that is *beneath themselves*? If we go strictly to Justice, nothing of less Dignity then the *Offender* can compensate for the *Offence*, if any thing but the *Offender himself*. And so it appears, some of the *Heathens* themselves thought by that famous saying amongst them,

Cum

Cum sis ipse Nocens, moritur cur Victima pro te?

And should we suppose God in his Judiciary proceedings with Men, to forgive upon a *Partial satisfaction*, to accept some *Imperfect* satisfaction to his Justice, and to make up the rest by his *Mercy*, this were to render his Attributes *Imperfect*, and to make him act like a *Man*, neither as infinitely just nor infinitely Merciful, not at all like *himself*; nay, in some measure to *deny himself*, which is impossible. The truth is, the evil of the world being in its Nature an offence against God, and the guilt arising from it relating to his Tribunal, where no Sentence can pass but what is the result of infinite and perfect Attributes, the terms of our pardon must come from God. 'Tis not in man to find out how God shall forgive him, or to to Chalk out the Tracks of Divine Justice and Mercy toward himself; nor will his guilt be removed, nor his thoughts be at rest, till he know Gods mind about it: Nothing can assure us of Reconciliation with God, but what is from Heaven appointed as the means of it. No natural knowledg can give us any certain direction about it, nor is it reasonable to believe it should. If Humane Nature had no absolute security in it self of its first state, how can we expect it should restore it self when

when once degenerated? What did not *remain* perfect when it was ſo, is much more unlikely to *recover* again out of Imperfection to be ſo. Every man may know he is degenerated from what he ought to be, and ſo may reaſonably collect from what he once was; but no man can reaſon himſelf into a certain way of Recovery. The whole world have ſubſcribed to their own Apoſtacy, but could never agree upon any certain remedy. How miſerably have Mankind tired themſelves, and to how little purpoſe, in finding out what would *appeaſe* Divine *Anger*, and *compenſate* for their *diſobedience*! No man ever yet worſhipped any God, but he made ſome *Offering* to him, in hopes that might *indemnifie* him, and be taken in *Lieu* of his own *puniſhment*. Men have at a Venture offered up all parts of the world in *Sacrifice* have tried all experiments, *victimis & lavacris*, and by all other means their beſt gueſſes could ſuggeſt to them, to *obliterate* their own *Guilt*, and to procure *Divine favour*; but never were upon any ſurer ground then their own vain *fancies* for *acceptance*. *Agathias* tells us in his ſecond Book *of the Perſian war*, that the *Perſians* were wont to ſolemnize a great *Holy-day* once a year, which they called *The death of Vices*, in which (as an eminent piece of Devotion) they ſlew

multitudes of *Serpents* & all other sorts of wild Beasts, and thereby thought they should *Execute* all their *Corruptions*, & safely *bury* their *sins*. The *Philosophers* abounded with *remedies* for this *Epidemical Disease*. Some thought to cure the evil of the world in a *Moral* way, some in a way *Mathematical*, and some by *Religious Ceremonies*. But alas, The right way of doing it has lain hid from *Ages* and *Generations* till God himself made it known, and revealed it from Heaven. VVhat a *trifle* is the *Blood* of a *Sheep* or an *Oxe* to satisfie for an Offence against an Infinite Justice! At how *easie* and *cheap* a rate might men *Sin*, and God be *satisfied*! And what a publick *tolleration* of evil were it, if the Blood of Bulls and Goats might take away sin, and the lives of *unreasonable* Creatures *Commute* for the sins of *Men*! The consideration of all these things does directly Steer us *upward*, and point us to a dependance upon *Revelation*, to give us a clear, distinct, and satisfying Knowledge of *God*, of *our selves*, and of this whole *World*? How man came to *Rebel*, and *Sin* first to *enter*? By what ways and means *Indemnity* may be obtained? And upon what terms we may be again *reconciled* to God and *accepted*?

This precious discourse, the design of which is to render it a reasonable supposal that

that there *ſhould* be in the general ſome *Divine Revelation*, ſome *Laws Supernatural* promulged to the world, and that Mankind ſhould not be wholly left to the conduct of *Nature*, can be no way ungrateful to thoſe who are already poſſeſſed with a due eſteem of the *Scriptures*, and do aſſent to their verity; becauſe 'tis to re-inforce one of the greateſt ſupports to all *Scripture-belief*. Nor will it ſeem impertinent to thoſe who are any way ingenious in their doubts and enquiries about this matter; becauſe 'tis naturally & neceſſarily the firſt ſtep that is to be taken, in order to their ſatisfaction: But may be very well offenſive to ſuch who ſhall deſign to themſelves a disbelief of the *Scriptures*, and make it their Province to *weaken* their *Authority*, and render all proofs brought for them *inſufficient*; becauſe it goes far towards an evident and apparent determination of the whole cauſe againſt them: Does indeed *petere jugulum* of their chiefeſt pretences, and virtually breaks the very *Back-bone* of all *Antiſcriptural* oppoſition; for if there be ſuch a thing as a *Revelation* made to the World (as that which the goodneſs of God, and the *wants* of men ſeem neceſſarily to call for) If God have given to Mankind a Law ſupernatural, *Where* is this Divine Law to be found? 'Tis but reaſonable to ſuppoſe it *ſomewhere* or

other upon Record. This Book we call the *Bible* must needs be it, and will certainly carry it against all *Pretenders*, the natural dictates of right *Reason* being *Judge*. What Book or Writing is there extant under Heaven, that can (with any tollerable colour) counterplead the *Bible* upon this account? A man must be horribly Hood-winkt in his intellectuals, that does not evidently see 'tis *impar congressus* between the *Bible* and all other *Pretenders*. From what parts of the world will you fetch such a *Supernatural* Law, by which we may suppose God to *Govern* Mankind? one either fit for him to *Give*, or for us to *Receive*, according to that *Natural Knowledge* we have of him, and of our selves, and that *Rational Judgment* to which all Supernatural pretences ought to be subjected? Where will you find a *Systeme* of *Divinity* that makes known to us (in a way suitable to our natural conceptions of him) the most of God, and of his Nature we are able to comprehend, delivers us from all the intanglements of Humane Nature by ways and Methods so proportioned thereunto, and discovers to us certain tracks to the highest happiness here and hereafter we are capable to enjoy? Shall we go to the Laws of *Lycurgus* and *Solon*, because they pretended to *Revelation*? Can any man be so stupid? Those Laws

Laws were chiefly *Municipal*, and made no pretence to what we enquire after. Shall we imagine the Books of the *Sybills*, becauſe they were thought to be filled with many *Divine ſecrets*, contained ſuch *Revelation*? The greateſt part, if not the whole of them is long ſince periſhed out of the world, which is proof ſufficient they were none of thoſe ſtanding Laws by which God deſigned to Rule and Judge Mankind. Some excellent *Greek Verſes* there are indeed extant at this day, which go under their *Names*; but they are upon good grounds by the moſt learned, ſuppoſed to be none of theirs. And if they were, the *Chriſtian Religion* and the Truths contained in the *Bible*, are ſo clearly deſcribed, and the *Pagan Religion* ſo directly and ſtrongly confuted therein, that the *Scriptures* can ſcarce have a greater *Teſtimony* given to their *Divinity*. Shall we go to the inſpired *Enthuſiaſtical Poets* for this *Revelation*? What a ridiculous foppery would that ſeem to one that has once converſed with the *Bible*! And what a *wild, extravagant Religion* ſhould we erect from the *Theology* of *Heſiod*! The *Hymnes* of *Orpheus*! The *Poems* of *Homer*! The *Odes* of *Pindar*! Or from *Virgil* or *Ovid*! Shall we look back to the *Heathen Oracles* for this *Revelation*? To thoſe of *Delphos*, *Dodona*, *Jupiter Hammon*,

and the rest? Who can be so marvelously vain? Besides, the consideration of that general *uncertainty*, and sometimes *falshood* that visibly attended their *responses*, the *Records* of those *Oracles*, the *Books* wherein their *Responses* and *Divinations* were contained, are long since perished and lost. Shall we goe as far as *Numa Pompilius*, and his *Goddess* for the old *Roman Theology*? That's impossible to be retrived. The Religion of *Numa* is long since vanished out of the World, and the *Books* wherein it was contained were openly *Burnt*. And upon this occasion were they burnt long after the death of *Numa*, in the *Consulship* of *Cornelius* and *Bebius*, there were found in *Rome* two *Coffins*, in the one whereof was the Body of *Numa*, and in the other fourteen Books of *Numa*'s, seven of them in *Latine* containing the *Laws* and *Ceremonies* of their *Religion*, and the other seven in *Greek*, concerning the Study of *wisdom*; and in these latter was much contained not only destructive to the *Gods*, and the Religion of *other Countreys*, but also to his *own*, and to the *Roman Profession*; of which the *Senate* well considerdering, resolved it as best, that the whole fourteen books should be openly burnt together: Which was accordingly done; Of which we have an account at large in *Valerius Maximus*

mus and *Varro*. Or ſhall we, at laſt, come to that *Arabian Prophet*, to *Mahomet* to ſet up his Collection of Precepts, his *Alchoran* (which he tells you, a hundred times over, *God* was the *Author* of, and that all Mankind could not have writ a ſyllable of it) to confront the *Bible*? 'Twere, to the full, as wiſe a project to light a *Ruſh-candle* and reſolve to out-face the *Sun*, as to encounter the *Bible* with ſuch *Mean* and *Ridiculous Stuff*. What an abſurd Foppiſh *Flam* is that *Alchoran*! Evidently a *Cheat* in every Page of it; A confuſed *Medley* of wicked contemptible *traſh*, heaped up together by a *Triumvirate* of *Arrians*, *Jews*, and *Pagans*, all known *Impoſtors* in the *Ages*, wherein they lived, and ſo transferr'd by the *Hiſtory* of their own times, to all future Generations. God has made every Reaſonable Mind (not ſome way or other Debauched or Pre-ingaged) a Touchſtone ſufficient to diſcover ſuch *counterfeit Metal*. Some part of it ſeems rather like the *Ravings* of men *Diſtracted* then any product of Common *Reaſon*. It tells us that *Men* were firſt created of *Shadow*, That the Earth was made in *two dayes*, and that God faſtened it to the Mountains by *Anchors* and *Cables*, That *Mahomet cut the Moon into two pieces, and Cemented it cloſe together again*: with a multitude of Such Raving

and Distracted *Fantasmes*. In many things 'tis evidently self-contradictious, and what is said in one place is directly overthrown in another. *Mahomet* himself sometimes plainly Confessing *He knows not whether He or His be in a way of Salvation*, (for which very saying, I wonder the people did not stone him) The whole of it a *Rapsody* of most prodigious Absurdities: A confused Inconsistent Composure: Principles of *Heathenisme*, *Judaisme*, and *Christianity*, all Generally *Corrupted*, and so wildly patcht up together, that *Mahomet* might very well declare what he did, *That he thought, No body would ever be able to understand his Law.* Whatever we find in it that carries the least Resemblance of Truth, is apparently stollen out of the *Old* and *New Testament*, though for the most part visibly *Falsified* and *inverted*. It tells us that *Jesus* was *secretly* conveyed into *Heaven*, and that *somewhat* in his *likeness* which was not himself, was *nailed* to the *Cross*. That He was not *really Crucified*, but that the *Jews* were *Abused* and *Deluded*. It tells us also that in the 14th. of St. *John's Gospel* (where mention is made of Sending the *Comforter*) *that there was much said of Mahomet, which the Christians have since Razed out.* Which is to father a ridiculous and impossible falshood upon them, for that

Gospel

Gospel was *Extant* long before *Mahomet* was born or thought of (for he was not born till the year of *Christ* 571) and published most parts of the world over, not onely in the *Greek Copies* of it, but in divers *Translations*, in the *Syriacke*, *Arabick*, *Ethiopick*, and *Latin* tongues, and was far enough from the possibility of any universal Alteration that could be made by the *Christians* in *Mahomets* time. That which the *Alchoran* tells us in general of the *Bible* and the *Christian Religion* directly overthrows it self, and *Mahomet* thereby has utterly subverted his whole Fabrick: For he says that *Moses* and *Christ* were *both sent from God*, and that the *Old* and *New Testament are Divine Books*, that *God imparted the Law to Moses, the Psalms to David, and the Gospel to Christ*. But pretends that as the Gospel succeeded the *Law*, so the *Alchoran* does the *Gospel*. Now if the first be true, I am sure the latter is false, unless God can contradict himself, which is impossible; For both *Moses* and *Christ* have delivered very many Doctrines directly *Contrary* to *His*. The *Bible* and the *Alchoran* are sufficiently *Inconsistent*. And therefore wherever the *Old* and *New Testament* are acknowledged to be *Books Divine*, and from *God*, the *Alchoran* ought, reasonably, to be Rejected as a Vile and wicked *Delusion*.

If

If it be asked, as usually it is, How that *Religion* came to *spread* so *far*, and the Disciples thereof to be so *Numerous*, if it be so *Vile*, and also so absurd a *Couzenage* as indeed it is! Such a Question will be easily answered if these Three things be considered. First, The *Mahometan Religion* ows its original to the *Sword*, more then to all its pretences besides. 'Twas *Mahomets* being a *General* that made him pass for a *Prophet*. Nor was his *Alchoran* at first received in any Nation where his Sword did not make way for it. 'Tis a Religion that was at first *Introduced*, and has been since *Propagated* and *Upheld* purely by *Force*. Not *Discoursed into* men, but *Imposed upon* them. *Mahomet* himself often declares that *God did not send him to convert the World by Miracles, but by the Sword and by Instruments of War*. And indeed, There is not a *Chapter* in his *Alchoran* where he does not preach *Fire* and *Sword*, *Warrs* and *Massacres*, for the advancement of his Law. Secondly, Whereever that *Religion* is introduced, all *Inquirie* into it is absolutely forbid, and men are *Made*, (without the least *Tasting* or *Chewing*) to *Swallow* the whole *Body* of *Mahomets Divinity* at *Once*. And by this means, *Ignorance* is grown so natural an Appurtenant to that *Religion*, that wherever 'tis setled, it does not only

only silence all Discourse of *Divinity*, but totally ruines all *Learning*, and brings men into perfect Enmity with all *Liberal Sciences*. 'Tis an easy thing to spread the *Basest Metal* as well as the purest, if we can prevent its *Trial*. Falshood and Truth are upon *Even termes*, where all *Reasoning* is *Forbid*. And, as *Vives* well observes, (discoursing of this *Mahumetan Tyranny*) *Tutum mentiendi genus est, Nolle rationem eorum quæ dicas reddere.* *'Tis a safe and sure way of Lying, to resolve to give no Reason for what we say.* As nothing is more contrary to the nature of Truth and that rational Reception it bids for, amongst mankind, then this principle, so nothing can be more Effectual to the introduction of all Errour and Deceit, then to *Compel* men to lay by, as useless, their own Reasons, and yield up themselves, by an implicite subjection to the conduct of such notions as others provide for them. Thirdly, 'Tis a Religion that Allows and Incourages men in the prosecution of *Sensual Satisfactions*. Says *Mahomet* to his Disciples, *Avenge your selves of your Enemies, and take as many Wives as you will, to propagate the Sectaries of Mahomet.* A sure way to oblige the corrupt part of the World, and by which the *Devil out-numbers Christ*. He himself Practiced accordingly; for his followers

lowers deny not but that he took *wives* at his pleasure, and sometimes *other mens*: And then most blasphemously introduceth God himself speaking as if he had, in an extraordinary way, Married them to him. And indeed, suitable to his Doctrines and Practices is the *End* he proposeth, and the *Heaven* he promiseth hereafter: A compleat enjoyment of all *Earthly* and *Sensual delights*: The *Paradise* he describes, being a place where men shall enjoy all the imaginable pleasures of *Meats*, *Drinks*, *Musick*, *Women*, and whatever the lusts of men can desire. Which sufficiently declares the *Nature* and *End* of his whole *Constitution*.

Nor is it any way hard to discover (if we consult the time when this *Enthusiastick Impostor* composed his *Alchoran*) out of what *Dunghills* much of it was *raked* together. That vile *Pollution* of *Marriage* by a Licentious *Multiplicity* of *Wives*, he had from the *School* of the *Nicholaitans*: His *Carnal Paradise* from *Cerinthus*; That absurd conceit *that Christ did not really suffer, but a Fantasm in his place*, was first forged by the *Cerdonians*: That *rage* his *Alchoran* is every where stuft with, against the *Trinity* and the *Deity* of *Christ*, came, no doubt, from the *Arrians*, who were famous at that time, & some of them his great *Assistants*;

In

In ſhort, The Religion of the *Alchoran* was at firſt founded, has been ſince propagated, and is ſtill upheld purely by the *Sword*; is in it ſelf ſo wicked, and ſo abſurd a conſtitution, in many things ſo *Heterogeneal* to the dictates of right Reaſon, that when ever it wants the *Military prop* to ſupport it, if ever it come to be nakedly expoſed to the Teſt of mens Reaſon, or to a Trial by *Perſecution*, it being neither founded in *Natural* Reaſon, in *Miracles*, nor in *Sanctity* and *Holineſs* of *Life*, the *Compages* of it will ſoon be *diſſolved*, and the whole of it will quickly *expire*.

But to return; He that rejects the *Bible* will be eaſily reduced to this *Dilemma*, either he thinks there is *ſome* Revelation extant from God to the world, or he thinks there is *none*. If he ſay there is *none*, firſt he puts the lie not only upon the *Chriſtian* and *Jewiſh*, but generally upon all the Religion that either has been, or is, throughout the world. *Revelation* (either *real* or *pretended*) having been the univerſal foundation in all Ages, of that conſtitution we call *Religion*. All Nations have reſpectively attributed the *Origine* of their *Myſteries* to their *Gods*. Which though it proves not that the world has generally had Revelation, nor juſtifies any one pretence to Revelation, upon which any one particular Religion

Religion is founded, yet it proves thus much, that by the judgment of the whole world there is good Reason to *expect* Revelation. And that thereupon Mankind have lived either in the *real* or *Imaginary* possession of it. And 'twere strange to conceive that the world should universally agree in the Reason and necessity of it, and all Nations in all Ages thereupon *pretend* to it, and yet there should neither be, in the general, any real or rational ground for the *Expectancy* of any such thing (for if there were, we cannot then, without impeaching Divine Justice & Goodness, refuse in the general to suppose it) nor the least truth any where in the *fact* of any such thing.

Secondly, If he say there is *none*, he will be forced to confess that God (who has made man the *Noblest* of all Earthly Creatures, and *Lord* of the world) has left him to a *worse Condition* in the present posture we find him, then the *meanest Creature* he has subjected to his use, which is greatly unreasonable to conceive. The meanest Creatures that God has made even to the *Ant*, he has given them a sufficient ability to attain the highest end of their beings. 'Tis so in every Creature beneath the rational beings of men; whatever happiness they naturally tend to, as their chief end, God has given them an innate ability that sufficiently

ently directs them for the obtaining of it; nor is there any defect in the meaneſt Creatures that way. 'Twere ſtrange to ſuppoſe it otherwiſe with man, that God ſhould not ſufficiently inſtruct him in all things neceſſary for him to know, in order to his higheſt end, and the obtaining of that Supreme good he naturally tends to; ſuppoſing him degenerated from an ability he once had, yet we can no way imagine it conſiſtent with Gods goodneſs to leave the whole of Mankind without a ſufficient means of Recovery, nor conſiſtent with the great end of Gods Creation, in all the works that he has made. All other Creatures deſire only what gratifies the ſenſual Appetite, not what is in it ſelf ſimply beſt. They center in a *ſenſual ſatisfaction* as their higheſt end, and are ſufficiently enabled for the obtaining of it. Man by his natural faculty mounts *upward*, reaches after a *higher* and more *Noble* happineſs, a good *above* and *beyond* this world. Man by Nature has an innate notion of a *Deity*, *a Supreme Being above him*, that has in himſelf all poſſible *Perfection*, is *ſuperlatively* good; The *Enjoyment* of this good, and a *Converſe* with ſuch a being he muſt needs *aim* at; becauſe 'tis the *higheſt Good* his Reaſon diſcovers to him, and in the trueſt judgement thereof the moſt *ſuitable* of all other to the rational

Naure

Nature. He also finds himself with a peculiar *Relation* and *Obligation* (above all other Creatures) to this Supreme being, and designed by his own faculties for present and future *Rewards* and *Punishments* from him. Now man were, in this respect, of all other Creatures, by far, the most unhappy, should he be left in the dark, and not fully informed and ascertained about these things which are the highest ends and the most necessary concerns of his being, should he not have some *certain account* of God, by what ways and means he may come to enjoy him, and upon what terms God will deal with men here and hereafter, have as full an account of God and of his own Duty, in reference to him as his rational being calls for, and he himself is capable of. And to arrive at this there is no possibility without *Revelation*. Natural Divinity, if duely pursued, points men directly to *Supernatural*, from a sense of its own deficiency: And our Natural light shews us the necessity of *Revelation*, from its own *imperfect discoveries*, and by directing us to many Duties in general, which (without Revelation) we know not well how to perform. My natural light tells me of a *Supreme* and *Perfect Being* that made me, but gives me no distinct or satisfying information about him. My natural

ral light enjoyns me to *Worſhip* him; but cannot ſufficienly direct me in the way of it. My Natural light tells me I am upon *ill* terms with God, and bids me (as my neareſt concern) indeavour a *Reconciliation* with him, and aſſures me of the *poſsibility* of it from the general notion I have of his *Goodneſs*; but can give me no ſure and certain *Directions* for the *obtaining* of it. In ſhort, My natural light tells me *Man* is a Creature made for *Supernatural enjoyments*, for *Rewards* and *Puniſhments* from God, *Superiour* to this *World*; but diſcovers not unto me ſufficient and infallible *means* (which in this caſe is of abſolute neceſſity to my welfare) for the *obtaining* the one or *avoiding* the other; but bids me look *upward*, and expect to be further taught from *above*. So that to ſay there is *no Revelation at all*, That God has left Mankind wholly to the conduct of *Nature*, is plainly to ſay God has left *Man* under that *unhappineſs* which no *Creature* is under beſides himſelf; that is, not fully *informed* about thoſe things he is moſt concerned to *know*, nor ſufficiently enabled to *obtain* the great *End* of his *Being*. 'Tis to ſay, God has made a *reaſonable Creature* with a direct tendency towards *himſelf*, and the higheſt *Supernatural* good, with great *Hopes* and *fears* of *Rewards* and *Puniſhments* from him, and

with inherent *Obligations* in his own Nature, relating to both, and yet hath left him with great *uncertainty* and *obscurity* to contemplate about these things, and has given him no *sufficient* (or to his own Reason, *satisfying*) *directions* about them; then which no conception more vile and impious, and in it self more contrary to all true notion of God, can at any time infest the minds of men.

If it be acknowledged there is any where extant a *Revelation* from *God* to the *World*, let it be *produced*. Let the best *rival* to the *Bible* upon that account, or all its *Competitors* together be brought forth, and let but the dictates of right and impartial Reason (of Reason, as much *it self* as we are able to conceive it, as abstracted from all *prejudice*, all *Byass* of *Custom*, *Education*, or any collateral *interest*, as we can suppose it) be the *Judge*, and we shall soon put an end to the Contest. Let men be but true to that Divinity they are born with, and to the genuine issues of their own Reason (which must be the *Judge* in this case) and the *Bible* must needs be *Predominant*, and prevail against all *Competition*. And that will be thus made to appear.

There are somethings which by the Judgement of right Reason must necessarily be *appurtenant*

purtenant to a *Revelation* from God, and such a *Divine Law* as we are in pursuit of, and without which it cannot reasonably be supposed. Now, we find *those things* peculiarly to belong to the *Bible*, and that they are no way applicable to *any other Writings* or *Pretences* to *Revelation* whatsoever. And this being so (as by the following particulars 'twill undeniably appear to be) where any Revelation in the general, is admitted, the *Bible* cannot with any colour of Reason be rejected: And in truth its Divine Authority will against all opposition be established.

First, There must be reasonably supposed (in any Divine Laws God shall reveal to the world) such a *Legislative Authority* expressed in *Commanding*, in *Promising* in *Threatning*, and throughout the whole of them, as is (by the judgement of our own Reason) suitable to the *Sovereignty* of *God* and our natural *subjection* to him, that is, we must needs suppose *God* to give *Laws* in a *way* like *himself*. In this respect the *Bible* is *singular*. No Book under under Heaven contains such an assumption of *Supremacy* over the world, nor speaks to us in such a *manner*, with that *Majesty* and uncontrollable *Authority* in *Gods* own *Name*, as this doth. Requires indispensible obedience from from all Mankind to whatever it enjoyns, as

the *Will* and *Pleasure* of the *Great God*, upon the *highest Penalty*, That of *Eternal destruction* to *Soul* and *Body*. How far any man could have gone in this respect in *personating* the Supreme Majesty of God, and abusing the world with a *Counterfeit* of his Divine Authority, needs not to be considered in this case (though, 'tis certain, the *Bible* has *out-gone* all the possible *contrivance* of *Men* in such a way, and none but *God* himself could have spoke to the world in words so becoming his own *greatness*, and so suitable to those conceptions right Reason will give us of him) because though many Books and Writings have made a claim to *Revelation* besides the *Bible*, yet in fact, no Book nor Writing has so much as attempted to *Command* the world in so *Majestick* a way, nor indeed in any way becoming the *Greatness* and *Sovereignty* of *God*. The *Bible* has a *peculiarity* in this respect above all *other Writings* that have been extant since the world began. We find not an instance where any have so far usurped the Throne of God, as with such an absolute *superintendency* to dictate to the world. All pretended Revelations have in this visibly discovered their own nakedness, and betrayed their own mean descent: Not one of them having been clothed with such a *Divine & Majestick Authority* as becomes a product of *Infinite Wisdom*

dom and *Power*: and most of them no way suitable to the common *Prudence* of *men*. The Ancient *Heathen* pretences to Revelation were, for the most part the *meanest* and most *trifling* part of those Ages wherein they were extant. And that *Alchoran* which, in later times, *Mahomet* has father'd upon *Revelation*, is a Systeme of Laws so prodigiously unsuitable to the *Majesty* of *God*, that 'tis, much of it, no way reconcileable to common *Discretion*, or any way worthy an Edition from Wise or or Good men.

Secondly, My Reason will tell me that a Revelation from God to the World must needs be supposed to give us an Account of *all things* necessary for us to *know*, and to carry in it a *Compleatness* and *Sufficiency* of *Instruction* and *Direction* for *all* the great *Ends* of *Mankind* relating to *this life* and a *future*. 'Tis not imaginable that God should make a *Revelation* to the world, and not make it proportionate and sufficient to all the *Ends* of Revelation. The great *End* of Revelation is to supply the *Deficiencies* of *Nature* (for if Nature were in it self perfect and without defect, there needed then no Revelation) and to furnish mankind with all those necessary Requisites to their own present and future happiness they stand in need of, and which

they cannot otherwise obtain. *Adequate* therefore to our Natural *Defects* ought our expectancy to be in this matter. When a Book proposeth it self to us as a *Law Supernatural* and containg *Gods mind* Revealed and make known to the World, 'tis a most reasonable way of Trial, to examine whether *This Book* contain *all those things* I may justly expect from such a Revelation, and be rationally accommodated to *All those wants* I expect a Revelation should supply, and for which a Revelation from God, my own Reason tells me, must needs be Designed. Now, the *Bible* stands *Single* in this respect likewise. No one Book, nor all the Books that now do, or at any time have pretended to Revelation, can answer *all the Ends* of a Revelation, besides it self, or endure such a rational Test, but are visibly Defective and Insufficient for those ends they must needs pretend to be Designed. What *Book*, besides the *Bible*, ever gave us so full a discovery of *God* as our own rational Nature looks after, tends to, and capacitate's us to receive? What *Book*, besides *This*, ever gave to mankind a clear and distinct account of the *First Existence* of things, and the *Origine* of the *Universe*? What *Book*, besides *This*, ever gave the least tolerable account of the *Origine* of *Evil*, the

first

first *Rise* and *Inlet*, with the after-*Progress* of it? the *Punishment* inflicted for it, and the certain Means to *Remove* and *Obliterate* it? Never any *Book* so answered that great *End* of Revelation, as to make a full discovery to us of the whole business of mans *Apostacy*, and of his *Recovery*. In short, What *Book*, but the *Bible*, gives us an account of *Gods proceedings* with *Men* from the first Foundations of the Earth, and has plainly and punctually told us what he *will do* to the end of the world, and for ever? has to the utmost discovered and supplied all our natural Defects, made known to us all that was necessary and fit for us to know, pointed us to the furthest bounds of our duty to God, and one towards another, and revealed to us plain and direct ways and means to attain the highest happiness here, and the most excellent Rewards hereafter our Beings are capable of? No other *Book* can so much as make a *pretence* to it, nor, with the least colour, be produced upon this account, in competition with the *Bible*. Did the world afford any *Other Book*, with an equal Pretence, that more fully answered all those Ends to which we may rationally expect a *Divine Revelation* should be Designed, I grant we had good Reason to preferr it before the *Bible*, and receive it as such; But if *This*

Book alone, and no other, be found to answer all the Rational ends of a Revelation, and to *exceed* all the Attainments of Mankind both Moral and Divine, and whatever has made Pretence to Revelation besides, There can be then no Reason at all to doubt, but that *This Book* ought to have the *Precedence* of *all others*, And really and truly is, what it self *claims* to be.

Thirdly, All Revelation must needs be supposed to be corresponding to, and perfective of, the true and genuine Issues of our *Natural Light*. There must be nothing in it relating to God, to our selves, or to any part of the world, that any way contradicts the *Law Natural*. For that being the *Primary Law* God gave to the world, and which is originally annexed to our Beings, and inseperable from our selves, 'Twere absurd to conceive (and indeed, upon many accounts, impossible to be) that God should ever Repeal either the Whole or any Part of it, but still proceed to Rectify and Compleat it, and Superstruct all future Revelation upon it. Two things, upon this account, we may reasonably expect from any pretence to Revelation. First, So farr as it relates simply to things Natural, it ought to be justified to us by the dictates of right *Reason*, and to be a Re-inforcement of the

the Law truly Natural. Secondly, Whatever it propoſeth to our Belief as *Supernatural*, ought to be no way unſuitable to a Rational reception as ſuch: For though I may well ſuppoſe God to reveale things to me that were *Above* and *Beyond* me, and which my Reaſon could not Diſcover (and cannot refuſe ſo to do, without a Negative upon the great End of Revelation) yet I cannot reaſonably ſuppoſe him to reveal any thing to me that is, in it ſelf, directly *Contradictory* to my Reaſon to believe, when 'tis ſo diſcovered, or uncapable of a rational aſſent to its verity, when in ſuch a way propoſed. Becauſe the deſign of all Revelation muſt needs be in a *Reaſonable* though *Supernatural* way, to Inſtruct and Inform mankind. The *Bible*, upon this account, will be found to juſtify it ſelf againſt all exception, and to prevail againſt all competition. Firſt, Not a Syllable in it Deſtructive to the Rational nature; ſome things indeed *above* the full *reach* and *comprehenſion* of it, but no way *Deſtructive* to it; And thoſe ſuch, and in ſuch a way propoſed to our belief, as ought to Enhance and no way to Leſſen our value and eſteem of it; Becauſe 'tis a thing proper and ſuitable to the Majeſty and Greatneſs of God, and that which we ought to expect from him, to bring ſuch things

things about, and to make such Sublime discoveries of himself to us as may provoke us to *Reverence* and *Adore* as well as to *Believe*. When God discourseth to us of his own Infinite Being, and tells us how the Deity it self does Exist, 'Tis a most rational thing to suppose, from the nature of the Subject, he should tell us many things that we cannot now *Grasp* in our *minds*, nor fully *Comprehend*. Indeed, whenever God reveals himself to the world, every mans Reason will tell him, 'tis a thing fit to be, That many things should be Received and Believed barely upon the Credit of Gods *Authority*, and justified to *us* from their *Author* when they exceed the bounds of our *Comprehension*. What respect and Reverence do we otherwise, pay to the *Great God*, more then we should do to the *Meanest humane Pretender*, to whom we cannot deny an Assent to whatever he can Demonstrate either to Sense or to Reason? And 'tis no way *Contradictions* to *Reason* to tell us any thing *is*, that is in it self *possible* to be, and no way *Unsuitable* to *God* to bring about (when we are told *God* is the *Author* of it) but highly *agreeable* to it: Things Naturally and Humanely *Impossible* are as *Easy* and as *Proper* for *God* to do, and as suitable to our Reason to conceive he that first made all things *should* do, as the ordinary

actions

actions of men are for them to do. Nothing is a Barr to my reaſonable Belief about *God* and his *Operations*, but either what is *againſt* that notion I have of his *Excellent Nature*, or what (to my reaſon) implies a perfect *Contradiction* in its *Exiſtence*, and ſo is utterly *Impoſſible* to be. The one, my reaſon tells me, God (becauſe of his Infinite *Perfection*) never will nor can do; And the other, it aſſures me, cannot be done. The *Bible* tells us of no one thing (in the higheſt *Supernatural Diſcoveries* it makes to us) but what is, in it ſelf, very *Poſſible* to *be*, Nor of any thing but what ſeems, to our reaſon, very agreeable to the *Nature* of *God* that it *ſhould be*, and very fit for us to believe (when we are told of God ſo) that it is. Secondly, Never any Book made ſuch a diſcovery to us of what is truely *Natural*, and ſo farr Revived and Reſtored to the truth of themſelves, as this has done, the *Natural Laws* of our own *Beings*, All impartial Reaſon being Judge. No Humane Wiſdome ever did, or ever could have given Mankind ſuch a proſpect of their *Natural Duties* toward *God* and toward *Themſelves* as the *Ten Commandements* have done, or compoſed ſuch a Syſteme of *Law Natural*, or made ſuch an exact *Compendium* of it. None but God that *made* man at firſt, and knew his *Original*, could

could have so farr *Discovered* him to himself; and retriv'd to his knowledg so much of his *Primitive State*, and discovered to him, What (by the judgment of his own Breast) he still *Ought* to be. The whole of the *Scripture-Religion* (both as it relates to *God*, and his *worship*, and our performance of *Relative duties* to each other) carries in it the Highest *Perfection* attainable by our *Natural Light*; And wherein it *exceeds* it, is the most *Suitable* to it, and the most *justified* by it of *any Religion* the world has been ever yet possessed of. What pure and admirable discoveries of Gods Excellent *Natnre* does it afford us, without the least Savour of what is *Earthly* and from *Below*! So corresponding to a *Rational Idea* of him, that nothing can be more; *Religion* and *Worship* without the least taint of *Idolatry* or *Superstition*; *Rules* of *Holy living*, without the least mixture of *Impurity*; Such Directions for our *Behaviour* towards *God* and *Man*, as every mans own *Breast* Subscribes to, as *Just*, *Holy*, and *Good*. Indeed 'tis a *Religion* that so *perfects Nature* and whatever it reveals that is *above* nature 'tis so graffed upon the Stock of our Natural knowledg, and in such a suitable way Super-added to it, and so Incorporates with it, as is admirable to conceive, and could be the effect of nothing but an *Infinite*

finite *Wisdome*, even of *God* himself who perfectly knew what was in Man, and what would be Best for him, and most Agreeable to him. What just cause is there to Reject and Disclaim all other Religions upon this single account! 'Tis impossible, That should be a *Law Divine* and *Supernatural* that proves any way *Destructive* to what is truely *Natural*. What *Unworthy*, *Unreasonable*, and *Unnatural* conceptions of God and his Being does the *Heathen Religion* stand justly charged withall! How contrary was it to the true dictates of Nature, and the natural *shame* inherent in every mans being, to use such horrible *Obscene* and *Lascivious Ceremonies*, as they did in the worship of some of their *Gods*? How *unnatural* and *Inhumane* was it to *Murther* each other, and shed the blood of Mankind, as they did in their *Sacrifices*? How may *Vices* that Nature condemns, grew up under the shadow of their *Religion*, and no way *reproved*; yea, some *allowed* and *justified* by it! The *Bible* spares not *one*: Goes to the utmost extent of all natural Evil, and all natural Good. The *Alcboran* also falls flat before the *Bible* upon this account. 'Tis so far from *perfecting* our natural light, or corresponding with it, that in some things it directly *overthrows* it: And is every where stuft with such *absurd*, *ridiculous*, and

and *incredible fopperies*, as do inevitably expose it to the just scorn and contempt of all unprejudiced *Reason*.

Fourthly, We must needs suppose that a *Revelation* from *God*, a Law Supernatural, to which an universal obedience is required, should have such a *Conveyance* to us as is *suitable* to its *Author*, and that great concern mankind have in it; that is, 'Twere a most irrational admission, that God should reveal himself to the world, and not do it in such a way as should carry in it Evidence sufficient to every rational enquiry. We ought to believe that when God requires our obedience to Laws as *Divine*, he should afford us means sufficient to know that *they are so*, such as may satisfie all reasonable *doubts*, and shame all wilfull *Opposition*. 'Twere to impeach the Wisdom, Justice and Goodness of God, to think otherwise. Without this neither Gods end nor mans end can be attained: Not Gods end; for he can never with Justice proceed to reward or punish men by a Law revea'ed, unless they have notice sufficient that it is so. Not mans end; for 'tis impossible to be any way advantaged by a Revelation, as such, unless I be first assured that it is such. How general soever pretences to Revelation have been, and mens belief of those pretences, yet no

no pretence to Revelation but the *Bible* alone, has in any Age been accompanied with such a rational justification as we ought to expect a *Divine Revelation* should be, to ascertain us that it is so. And of this, the fact is sufficiently evident: All pretensions that way have been either recommended to the world upon the credit of mens *bare words*, or else have obtained a reception by means visibly capable of *delusion* and *imposture*. What reasonable assurance had the *Heathen world* of a *Divinity* in their *Oracles* (which yet made the most probable pretension of any thing amongst them to it?) 'Tis acknowledged by all that lived in those times, That the *responses* of those *Oracles* were given by persons *visible*, and *seen* when they did it. In some of them by young Virgins, which they supposed them to receive in a strange *Obscene* way, not fit to be mentioned; and in others of them by a man whom they called the ὑποφήτης, one that spake under the *Oracle* out of the *Caverns* of the Earth, by the Vapours of which they supposed him *Inspired*, and to become an *Enthusiast*. That those *Oracles*, for the most part, uttered things *doubtful* and *un-intelligible*, is evident, and sometimes contrary to Truth; as we may see plainly set down in *Thucidides*, and other Authors of their own, and which never came to

pass

pass (one Instance of which was singly sufficient to confute their *Divinity*.) No *Almanack-maker* writes with less certainty of the *weather*, then they generally pronounced about future events. And the best excuse their greatest Adorers made then for them, was, That those *Dæmons* that inspired the predictions, did not themselves know things future, otherwise then by their inspection of the *Stars*, and so could collect from thence but *uncertain conjectures*. *Plutarch*, after all the pains he has taken to give the world a right account of the first *rise* of those *Oracles*, and the cause of their after *ceasing*, and spent much time in discoursing whether the *Dæmons* that first caused them were not *Mortal* and *Perishable*! Or whether they removed not their *Places*, and changed their *abode*! and many things of that Nature: At last concludes with this excellent *Philosophy*, *That the true Cause of those Oracles was, that the Earth in some places was endued with certain Prophetick Virtues, which came by Exhalations to be mingled with, and insinuated into Souls fitted to receive those inspirations, and so cause in them Enthusiasms and predictions of future things. And, at last that Virtue, in the Subterranean Caverns is spent, and evaporates and so the Oracular Spirit ceaseth.* What ground had the Heathen for all that Religion they took

took from their *Poets*, but their own *Words* that they were *Inſpired?* What other Evidence had the *Romans* at firſt for their *Religion*, but that *Numa Pompilius* told them he converſed with a *Goddeſs*, and received it from *Her?* What have the *Turks* to this day to aſſure them that *Mahomet* was a *Prophet* inſpired, and converſed with *God* and the Angel *Gabriel*, beſides his own bare *word?* He himſelf diſclaimed working of *miracles*, and avowed himſelf ſent from Heaven to convert the world with his *Sword*. A *Revelation* from *God* ought to be accompanied (and cannot be ſuppoſed to be otherwiſe) with ſuch plain and direct evidence as is ſuited to all reaſonable ſatisfaction, though it prevail not to a univerſal conviction; ſuch as will abundantly juſtifie it ſelf to the ſtricteſt ſcrutiny of all wiſe and good men, however it be judged of by perverſe and corrupt men. The *Bible* is not only ſuch for the *matter* of it, as that we make appeal to the moſt genuine iſſues of every mans Reaſon, whether the *Juſtice*, *Holineſs* and *Goodneſs* of God be not very tranſparent in it, but in its *gradual Conveyance* to the World at ſeveral times, and in diſtant Ages and places, has been viſibly accompanied with *open* and *apparent Evidences* of Gods Infinite and Almighty power, ſuch (and in ſuch a manner viſible).

as no one thing in the world besides it self can make a pretence to: And such as the fact of them, its worst Enemies (not a *Celsus*, nor a *Julian*) did ever assume impudence enough to deny; And indeed is eminently and singularly justified to us (as in particulars shall be shewed hereafter) by a concurrence of all those Evidences from whence a rational satisfaction about a *Law Supernatural* and *Divine* ought finally to result.

Fifthly, A *Revelation* from *God*, my Reason will tell me, must be *without any visible defect*. 'Tis unreasonable to father that upon God, which we our selves upon good grounds are able to charge with *failing* and *Imperfection*. Whatever claims from *Him*, and speaks to us in his *Name*, must have nothing in it *unlike* him, or *unworthy* of him. A pretence to Revelation must be above any just and reasonable *Exception*, or it naturally becomes its own Executioner. If in the judgment of right Reason it be found guilty of *Corruption* in *Doctrine*, or of any *falshood* in matter of *fact*, 'tis but equal to reject it as a *Spurious* and *fictitious Delusion*. And therefore 'twas rightly said of St. *Austin* to St. *Jerome*, *Si mendacium aliquod in Scripturis vel levissimum admittatur, Scripturæ Authoritatem omnem mox labefactari ac convelli.*

If

If we admit the leaſt falſhhod in any part of the Bible, we ruine the Authority of the whole. All the *Counterfeits* of *Revelation* have upon this account viſibly betrayed themſelves, and revealed to us their own original. No one but the *Bible*, can the world produce, that will not ſome way or other diſcloſe its own ſhame, and that falls not under ſome (nay, many) juſt and reaſonable exceptions, 'Tis this *Book* alone in which there is not a *flaw* to be found. 'Tis only this Divine Law that is *Perfect*. The *Bible* conſiſts of three parts, the *Doctrinal*, the *Hiſtorical*, and the *Prophetical*. Let the moſt accute *Anti-ſcripturiſt* living produce any one Doctrine out of the Bible, that to the judgment of right Reaſon ſeems corrupt and unſound: Let him ſhew any one *Propheſie* relating to things paſt, not duly fulfilled: Let him, upon good and ſufficient *Hiſtorical* Authority, palpably diſprove any one matter of fact in the Hiſtory of the *Bible*, and wee'l yield him the cauſe. And if this be not to be done (as in fact it never has been, and we are well aſſured never can be) If a Book containing ſo much variety of Hiſtory, far beyond any other Book extant, for ſo many thouſands of years: If a Book pronouncing with that poſitive certainty about ſuch a multitude of future events, in ſo many ſeveral Ages, and

relating to so many several persons and places; containing in the Doctrinal part of it Directions and Rules for the whole business of mens Duty to God, and toward each other: If this Book have not a *flaw* to be found in it: If it be proof against all exception: If there be nothing but *Truth* in it, in all these respects; what more invincible Evidence can there be given to its *Divinity*? Who but God himself could have indited such a *Book*? And who but a man *wilfull* and *absurd* can withstand such a Conviction? 'Tis the *Bible*, and 'tis that Book *alone*, upon every *Page* of which that Image and Superscription of God is engraven, *Truth it self*. 'Tis a Book singular in its universal Triumph over all Assaults. Where is there a Book to be found, treating of any considerable subject (much less of such a Nature as this) that can so appeal to the rational Judgment of Mankind, and challenge its worst enemy to find a *fault*? All Humane products are brought forth in the likeness of *Men*, *failing*, and *Imperfect*. Neither the best nor the wisest of men ever exceeded those bounds. Of this we are experimentally assured by all *History*, *Philosophy*, and all *Humane-Theology*. This Holy Book, as 'tis alone the true and legitimate Off spring of God, and that which only contains his mind Authoritatively revealed

vealed and made known to the world, so it has singly appurtenant to it all those *requisites* necessary to a Divine *Revelation*. And without which no such thing can rationally be supposed.

These things being so; He that rejects the *Bible* will find he is unavoidably obliged, either to deny that there is any *Revelation* at all, and consequently to give some good answer to what has been urged for the reasonable supposal of it, and some tollerable account how Mankind (when we consider Gods goodness, and our own necessities) can be supposed to be left without it; or else to produce somewhat that with more Justice and better Evidence can put in a claim to it: A Model more becoming the greatness and goodness of God, and more suitable and useful to men. The first, I dare say, will be found a task utterly impracticable, if unprejudiced reason may be Judg; and with what success the latter is like to proceed, and how visibly absurd 'twill render its undertaker, will soon be determined by every sober mind; when it plainly appears by what has been said, that so many things which my Reason tells me must all necessarily accompany a *Divine Revelation*, and without which it cannot be admitted as such, are *all* of them found *peculiarly* appurtenant to the *Bible*, and

cannot belong to any other *Books* or *writings*, or to any other *Pretences* to *Revelation* whatsoever.

Having thus established these two general points; First, that 'tis a thing in it self reasonable and fit to believe, that there should be *some Revelation* made from God to the world, some Supernatural Laws promulged as the great Rule of mens lives here, and Gods Judgment hereafter. And that these Laws should be somewhere or other extant upon Record (that Mankind might be fully assured and ascertained about them, and that they might be visible to all) that there should be *some* such *Book* as the *Bible pretends* to be, and that 'tis greatly unreasonable to believe the contrary. And Secondly, that in the Judgment of right Reason there are many general qualifications that must necessarily be appurtenant to such a Revelation whereſoever 'tis extant, and by which 'tis but reasonable that Mankind should make a Judgment of every pretence to it, and that all those qualifications are found punctually and peculiarly belonging to the *Bible*, and cannot be applied to any other extant pretences to Revelation whatsoever. I shall now proceed to the second thing proposed, which was a more *distinct* and *particular* proof, and endeavour to make it appear that *this Book* is in-

indeed ſent us from Heaven, and is in truth *that Revelation* we have good cauſe to expect from above, and that we have all thoſe *Reaſons* concurring to make us acquieſce in it as ſuch, from whence a Judgment in ſuch a caſe ought finally to reſult: That there is ſo much Evidence to be given in, to prove its Divinity, as no man ought to deſire, nor can reaſonably expect more, in a matter of ſuch a Nature: And ſo much, that where mens corrupt Intereſts and prejudices are not *Predominant*, will appear ſufficient to every impartial enquiry.

And this ſhall be proſecuted in this Method. I will theſe ſeveral ways conſider this Book. Firſt, *In the time of its conveyance to the World.* Secondly, *In the way and manner of its conveyance.* Thirdly, *In the ſucceſs and effects of it, ſince its conveyance.* And laſtly, *In it ſelf, in the matter of it as we now find it.* And from each of theſe conſiderations will a ſignal Teſtimony be given in to its *Divinity*, and when we have taken a view of the whole, we ſhall find that the Book both in the *Matter* of it, and in all the *Circumſtances* that have at any time attended it, does eminently relate it ſelf to God as its *Author*, and cannot be reaſonably judged the product of any *Humane contrivement* whatſoever.

For the first, When we reflect upon the *Time* of this Books conveyance, we shall find two things of very great weight offering themselves to our consideration. First, the *Antiquity* of those things it relates to us, and informs us of: And Secondly, the *Antiquity* of this *Book it self* since composed and delivered to us with such a relation. The Contents of this Book reach as far as the *first foundations of the Earth and the Heavens*, and give us an account of *Gods Revelations* to Man since his *first make* and *Original*, and of an *Orall* and *Verball* intercourse between God and the World for two thousand four hundred and odd years, before it was any where extant upon Record or any part of it written: Which no other Book since the World began so much as makes a pretence to. If we consider the Revelation Historically contained in this Book, 'tis what was from the *beginning*, and of the same *Date* with the *World* it self. If we consider the *Edition* of it in this Book, and the time of this Books *actual Publication* with all the *additional Revelations* contained in it, we shall find this Book to be the *first born* in its kind, to precede all other *writings* whatsoever, and in truth to be extant while *Thales*, *Milesius*, *Homer*, *Hermes*, and the most primative writers the world had, were unborn and

and unthought of. *Moſes* wrote of the *God* of *Abraham*, long before any of the *Heathen Gods* had a *written* mention made of them: God pleaſing ſo to order it, that although the Revelations he made to the World were not *written* from the beginniug, yet they were written long before any *other Writings* were extant: And his own Laws were *firſt recorded*, and all other Writings are of a ſubſequent Date to this Holy Book, Firſt. I will evidence this in point of *fact*, and ſhew that it is ſo, that to this Book is indeed due the right of *Primogeniture*, and that all other Books are of a much *after-edition*. And Secondly, examine what reaſonably reſults from thence toward that proof of the *Bible* we are abour. To all which this muſt be premiſed, that when we ſpeak of the *Bible* as thus *Ancient*, we intend actually no more of it then the Writings of *Moſes* (the whole Contents of the *Bible* being above four thouſand years in a gradual publication, and the *Bible* it ſelf above a thouſand and ſix hundred years in writing; for ſo long it was from the time that *Moſes* writ to St. *John* the *revealer*) nor need we intend more to juſtifie the Antiquity of the whole; becauſe 'tis all there virtually contained, all the reſt is ſuperſtructed upon that as its foundation, and every ſeveral part of the *Bible* af-

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ter *Moses* till the *Top-stone* was laid appears evidently to be writ in direct pursuance of what *Moses* at first delivered; and so much St. *Paul* affirmed before *Felix*, that he taught nothing but what was long before extant in *Moses* and the *Prophets*. For the first, That the *Books* of *Moses* are in fact the most *Ancient*; I find both *Jews* and *Christians* have been greatly concerned to make it manifest, as judging it a point that did greatly credit their profession, and highly justifie that *Religion* they adhered to. *Josephus* and others of the *Jewish* writers have much insisted upon it, and amongst the *Christian Writers*, *Justin Marter*, *Tertullian*, *Clemens Alexandrinus*, *Eusebius*, *Cyrill* of *Alexandria*, in his Books against *Julian*, St. *Austin* and others: But most especially *Justin Martyr* and *Eusebius*; *Justin Martyr* in his *Parenetick* to the *Gracians*; because they used with great Arrogance to boast of the *Antiquity* of their *own Learning* and *Religion*, and upon that account to look with great contempt upon *others*, proves against them out of *Pagan Authors* (and those chiefly their own) beyond all reasonable denial, that the Books of *Moses* were of much greater *Antiquity* then the most *Ancient writers* they could make a pretence to: And that the *Christian* Religion, being the natural issue of those Writings founded upon

upon them, and derived from them, was no *new* or *upſtart* invention; but indeed the *firſt* and moſt *Antient written* and *unwritten* Truth the World was poſſeſſed of; and the ſame thing is afterwards more largely and diſtinctly proved and made good by *Euſebius* in his *Evangelical Preparation.* Who thus concludes, *Quare omnibus Diis ac Heroibus Græcorum multo Vetuſtior Moſes invenitur.* And indeed the moſt Ancient of the *Græcian Gods*, as appears by their own *Hiſtories*, were not of a much *Earlyer* date then the *Warrs* and ruines of *Troy*, which *Moſes preceded* ſome hundreds of years. *Joſephus* ſays in his firſt *Book* againſt *Appion* That the *Græcians* had no *Elder write* then *Homer*, who lived as *Pliny* ſays two hundred and fifty years after the *Trojan Warr* (which War was about four hundred and ſeven years before the *Olympiads* began) according to *Solinus* two hundred and ſeventy years, *as Herodotus* thinks three hundred; But 'tis clear from his own *Poems* that he lived ſome very conſiderable time *after*, at leaſt one hundred years by the Loweſt calculation. *Moſes* was ſo long before him and ſo much his *Predeceſſor* that 'tis granted by all that make mention of him That he lived ſome hundreds of years at leaſt four hundred and odd before the *Battle of Troy*, before the beginning of the *Olympiads* not leſs then

then eight hundred and forty years, (Till which time the *Grecian History* is generally Confused and Imperfect, nor had they any certainty in *Story* till then, which *Varro* positively affirms, and *Eusebius* also proves out of the *Annals* of *Africanus* who tells us *Usq; ad Olympiadas nihil exploratum in Historiâ Græcorum invenitur, sed omnia confusis conscripta temporibus sunt: Post Olympiadas vero quoniam quadriennio diligentissime omnia notabantur, Nulla penitus confusio temporum fit.* And indeed till that time there is little certainty in any Story but that of the *Bible*) He lived before the building of *Rome* about eight hundred sixty and five years, for *Rome* was founded in the beginning of the Seventh *Olimpiad*, which was twenty five years after their first beginning. But suppose *Homer* was not the first *Gracian Writer*, as *Eusebius* and others think, and perhaps truly enough, that they had others before him, 'Tis certain and agreed to by all; They had no *Letters* amongst them till *Cadmus*, nor any *Written-Learning* for some considerable time after him. And 'tis well known that *Cadmus* was Later then *Moses*; Those that carry him highest make him but contemporary with *Josuah*, and he is as some think, more truely to be reckoned of the same time with *Othniel* mentioned in the book

book of *Judges*. And yet we find the Ancienteſt learning the world poſſeſſed of beſides the *Bible*, is written in the *Greek* tongue. *So Juſtin Martyr* obſerves, ſpeaking of this matter, ſays he, *Si quis vel Poetarum veterum, vel Legiſlatorum, vel Hiſtoricorum, vel Philoſophorum meminiſſe velit, comperiet tamen illos Libros ſuos Græcorum compoſuiſſe literis.* Both *Juſtin Martyr* who lived within a hundred and thirty of *Chriſt* and *Euſebius* about two hundred after him, have evidently proved yeares from the beſt and moſt acknowledged Calculations, and from the mention that is made of *Moſes* by Prophane Writers, ſuch as *Sanconiathon* the *Phænician-Antiquarie*, *Beroſus Caldeus*, *Ptolomeus*, and *Manetho*, *Egiptian Chronologers*, and amongſt the *Græcians*, *Artapanus*, *Polemon*, *Eupolemus*, and from *Trogus Pompeius* epitomized by *Juſtin* and others, that *Moſes* was the firſt *Legiſlator*, and lived long before any Authors of Books were extant; And this is alſo very particularly affirmed by *Diodorus Siculus* (the beſt and moſt eminent Hiſtorian the *Græcians* had, who ſays himſelf he ſpent thirty years in Travel to ſearch out the *Antiquities* of all Countries and to inable himſelf to write a *General Story*) for he tells us in his *Hiſtory* that he had learnt from the *Egyptian prieſts* that *Moſes* was the *Firſt Legi-*

Legislator and Preceded all others in that kind. We are told by many *Ancient Authors* that he lived with (and to them St. *Austin* agrees in his 18*th*. *Book De civit. Dei.*) and by others, That he Preceded *Cecrops* the founder of *Athens*, after whom all those Ancient and memorable things fell out in *Greece*, as *Deucalions flood*, *Phaetons fire*, the birth of *Erichthonius*, the *rape* of *Proserpina*, the *misteries* of *Ceres*, the institution of the *Eli*[illegible] *Sacrifices*, *Triptolemus* his art of Tilling the Ground, the carrying away of *Europa*, the birth of *Apollo*, the building of *Thebes* by *Cadmus*, after whom also where *Bacchus*, *Minos*, *Perseus*, *Esculapius*, *Hercules*, and others whom we find mentioned in the *Græcian Authors* as most *Ancient*; Nor had the *Græcians* any higher terms to express *Antiquity* by, then *Cecropian* and *Oggian*, which they used to call all such things as they thought most Ancient from *Cecrops* and *Ogges*, in whose times they supposed Men like *Mushroms* sprung naturally out of the Earth about *Athens*. But the certainest account that seems to be given of the direct Time in which *Moses* lived, is this, That he was Contemporary with *Inachus* the first King of the *Archieves*. In this, Chronologers seem most generally to agree, as *Scaliger* shews in his most learned Animadversions upon *Eusebius*

bius his *Chronologie*. *Justin Martyr*, *Tertullian* *Tatianus*, *Clemens Alexandrinus*, *Athenagoras*, *Theophilus*, and many others of the *Christian Writers* affirm it, and from many *Heathen Authors* we have direct Evidence for it. *Polemon* in his first Book *Rerum Græcanicarum*, is expres in it, and *Apion*, both in his *Commentary* that he writ against the *Jews*, and also in other of his Writings, speaks of the *Jews* coming out of *Egypt*, *Regnante apud Archivos Inacho, quibus* (sayes he) *prefuit* Moses. And *Ptolomeus Mendesius*, an *Egyptian* that wrote the *Chronicle* of *Egypt*, sayes, that *Moses governed the Jews, and lead them out of Egypt, quando Inachus Argis regnabat.* And 'tis sufficiently known to all that are any way verst in *Antiquity*, that *Inachus*, and also *Cecrops*. lived some hundreds of years before the *Trojan War*, and long enough before any Books, or the most Ancient *written* Learning the world had, was extant. *Tertullian* in the 19 *Chapter* of his *Apology* tells the *Romans* they also, as well as the *Græcians*, glorified much in *Antiquities*; sayes he, 'Our Religion far out-does all 'you can produce of that kind; for the Books 'of one of our Prophets only, (*viz.*) *Moses* 'wherein it seems God hath inclosed as in a 'Treasury, all the Religion of the *Jews*, and 'consequently all the Christian Religion pre-

'ceding

'ceding for many Ages together) reach be-
'yond the Ancienteſt you have, even all your
'publick Monuments, the Antiquity of your
'Originals, the eſtabliſhment of your Eſtate,
'the birth of moſt part of the people, the foun-
'dation of many great Cities, all that moſt
'advanced by you in all Ages of Hiſtory, and
'memory of times, the invention of Characters,
'which are Interpreters of Sciences, and the
'Guardians of all excellent things, I think I
'may ſay more, even your Gods, Temples,
'Oracles and Sacrifices; Have you heard men-
'tion made of that great Prophet *Moſes*:
'He was contemporary with *Inachus*, he pre-
'ceded *Danaus* three hundred fourſcore and
'thirteen years, the Ancienteſt of all that
'have a name in your Hiſtories: He lived
'ſome hundreds of years before the ruine of
'*Troy*. Every of the other Prophets ſucceeded
'*Moſes*, and yet the laſt of them all is of the
'ſame Age as your firſt Wiſe men, Law-
'givers, and Hiſtorians were. And indeed,
well might he tell them ſo; for the Prophets
Hoſea and *Iſaiah* were contemporary with the
firſt *Olympiad*, which began, as *Scaliger* proves
aut of *Euſebius* and others, but in the Reign
of King *Ahaz*, whoſe Son *Hezekiah* lived at
the ſame time with *Numa* in *Rome*; and *Eſdras*
himſelf, and the lateſt Writers of the *Old Te-*

ſtament

Teſtament wrote before *Socrates* Philoſophized in *Athens*, who taught not there till ſome time after the *Captivity*. This Antiquity of *Moſes* and his *Writings*, and their precedency to all other written Religion or Learning, is in fact ſo evident, that 'tis not capable of any tollerable denial: And as *Scaliger* ſayes in his diſcourſe upon *Euſebius*, the proof of it reſulting ſo plainly from the univerſal Teſtimony of *Heathen Authors* themſelves, *nihil ſupereſſe Paganis videtur, niſi aut ut ingenua confeſſio ab iis exprimeretur, aut ſilentium pertinaciæ finem faceret*; And he adds, *quod certe fæliciter ceſſit, ut & hac in parte Porphrius manus daret.* 'Tis not made out from any nice diſputes between *Chronologers*, comes not within any near compaſſes of time, but from a general concurrence of all Hiſtories, and is ſo far beyond the reach of all contradiction that the worſt Enemies to our Religion have agreed it, and given in their Teſtimony to it. Of this *Euſebius* in the tenth book of his *Præp. Evan. Chap.* 3. takes ſpecial notice, and tells us, that *Porphrie* (one of the moſt *raging* malicious Enemie that ever the *Chriſtians* met with) had in his fourth book which he writ againſt them, given this Teſtimony to *Moſes* and his *Antiquity*; *That he had written the Hiſtory of the* Jews *truly, which thing he had perceived by*

conferring it with Sanchoniathon *the* Berutian, *who rehearseth the very same Circumstances, and Names, and Places that* Moses *does, the which he had learned out of the Registers of one* Hierumbalus *a Priest of the God of* Levi, *and out of the Chronicles of the Cities, and out of Holy Books dedicated to Temples; and this* Sanchoniathon (sayes he) *was after* Moses *about the time of* Semiramis. By which it evidently appears, he had such an Opinion of the *Antiquity* of *Moses*, that he makes him to be much earlier in the World then we affirm him to be. But 'tis agreed on all hands he lived and writ in a time long before any other Authors of books, or any other written Learning was known..

And this clear Evidence we have (so clear, that in such a case a clearer cannot be expected) of the Antiquity of *Moses* in point of fact, and the Preeminence of his Writings above all others in that respect, gives us very probable ground to believe, that he himself was the first introducer of *Letters* as well as the first Writer of *Books* (whatever other Nations have fabulously boasted to the contrary, and notwithstanding *Plinies* absurd supposition, that *Letters* were *Eternal*; because he imagined the World to have been so) for 'tis not reasonable to think if the World had enjoyed he

the use of *Letters* before, but that there would have been some Monuments of it before his time remaining, at the least to the next after Ages, of which we should have had some credible account from them. And therefore *Diodorus Siculus* gives this as the Reason why there were no more Antient *Histories* and that the Actions of Kings were not Recorded of old; because the World wanted *Letters*: *Impossibile est* (sayes he) *primas Literas aque ac primos Reges vetustas extitisse.* And *Josephus* gives the very same Reason why we have no more Antient History then we have; because the world antiently wanted the use of Letters; but especially we cannot suppose but that those *Revelations* God made before of himself and his mind to some parts of the World, would have been safely preserved in *Writing*, and left upon Record to posterity long before *Moses* writ; nor can we well imagine that those Holy men to whom at any time God pleased to reveal himself, should not use their utmost diligence in the best way to secure and communicate so inestimable a Treasure; of this we hear not the least upon any tollerable ground of credit, nor of any other Writings before *Moses*, but upon reports that appear grosly fictitious and fabulous. 'Tis a thing greatly probable, that till *Moses* his time the

World knew nothing of *Letters*; for we neither find any Laws of God, or of Men written before, and 'tis likewise most probable that we owe them not, nor their use to *Humane invention*, but to *Divine Revelation* (and 'tis likely *Plato* had learned so much from the *Jews*, when he said in his *Cratilus* that the *Original* of *Letters* was from the *Gods*) 'Tis a thing offers its self very fairly to our belief, that God himself, when he gave the *Ten Commandements* written by his own finger to *Moses*, introduced the *first Alphabet*, and that *Letters* themselves and those Divine precepts are of an equal Date; I insist not on this as capable of any certain and positive proof, nor if it were, is it to be urged as a convincing Evidence of the truth of the *Bible*: But yet 'tis a Circumstance of very considerable weight, and has very good probabilities for its belief, and that we shall find if we consult but what *Chrysostome*, *Theophilact*, and other of the *Christian Writers* have said in the justification of it: *Cyrill* of *Alexandria* in his seventh Book against *Julian* insists much upon it: *Vives* upon the thirty ninth Chapter of St. *Austins* 18 *Book de Civ. Dei*, sayes, that 'tis the most common opinion both of *Jews* and *Christians*, that *Moses* first gave *Letters* to the *Hebrew Language* (which doubtless has the *Priority*

erity of all others) and that *Eupolemus*, *Artapanus*, and many other profane Authors affirm it, and that both the *Egyptians* and also the *Phœnicians* (from whom the *Græcians* first learnt the use of Letters) had their Letters from *Him*, and that *Moses* was that *Mercury* to whom the *Egyptians* ascribe the first invention of them.

The Objections that are usually made against this, seem but of very little weight. First, we are told of certain *Tractates* of *Enoch*, that were written before the Flood. Secondly, of two *Pillars* of the Sons of *Seth* with observations *Astronomical engraven* upon them, which they set up to continue their Learning, and that it might remain beyond the Flood which *Adam* had foretold them of, The one of which remained in the Countrey of *Syria* till the time of *Josephus*, as he himself sayes. Thirdly, that *Moses* in the 21 of *Numbers* makes mention of *the Book of the Wars of the Lord*, as a Book extant before that time. And fourthly, that *Moses* himself is said to be *Learned in all the Learning of the Egyptians*, which learning probably was written. For the first, That there were *Books* of *Enochs Writing* before the Flood which were preserved in the Ark, (for so they must be) seems to be a story wholly fabulous; we find not one word of them a-

amongst the *Jews* in the time of our *Saviour* and the *Apostles*, nor before, and 'tis certain if there had been any Books then extant in truth written by him, they would have been in great esteem and veneration in the *Jewish Church*, though they had not been within their *Canon*, (which we are sure they were not) and *Philo*, or *Josephus*, (most diligent searchers of their Antiquities) would have made some eminent mention of them, in whose Works we find *altum silentium* about any such Books; and therefore 'tis not to be supposed they believed there were any such real Books then extant. But 'tis most probable that after the Apostle *Jude* had in his *Epistle* quoted a Prophecie of *Enoch*, which Prophecie, without doubt, he came to the knowledge of, either purely by *Revelation* (which I rather believe) or else by a *Tradition*, the truth of which was ascertained to him by *Revelation*, by which means came others also of the *Sacred Writers* in after-times to be ascertained of what they writ about divers things that relate to the History of *Moses*, that were not to be found in his Books; for in the Psalms we find mention of some things done in *Moses* his time, that are not recorded in his Books: St. *Paul* in the 9 to the *Hebrews*, sayes, that *when* Moses *had spoken every precept according to the Law, he*

he took the blood of Calves and Goats, with Water, and Scarlet Wool, and Hyſſop, and ſprinkled both the Book and all the People, ſaying, this is the Blood of the Teſtament, &c. In which the Apoſtle has added ſeveral things that are not inſerted by *Moſes* in the relation of this paſſage in the 24 of *Exodus*. So *Stephens* Speech ſet down in the 7 of the *Acts*, tells us, that *Moſes* in killing the *Egyptian ſuppoſed that his brethren would have underſtood how that God, by his Hand, would deliver them, but they underſtood not*; By which we have a Reaſon given for *Moſes* killing the *Egyptian*, that he himſelf has no where ſet down, and by which we come to underſtand, that before *Moſes* went into the Land of *Midian*, God revealed to him that he was to be the deliverer of that people, which *Moſes* himſelf has not any where told us. I ſay, 'tis probable that ſome Hereticks in the Church (moſt likely the *Gnoſticks*, who much cryed up thoſe *Spurious Writings*) to promote their own corrupt Opinions and Intereſts, took occaſion from thence to frame certain counterfeit Books (juſt as ſome others did under the names of *Jannes* and *Jambres*, after St. *Pauls* mention of them) as written by *Enoch* before the Flood; which Books have ſufficiently betrayed themſelves; for thoſe that were publiſhed under his name were

stuft, as St. *Austin* sayes, with such absurd and fabulous Stories of *Angels*, and such ridiculous relations of *Gyants*, whose *Fathers* were *Angels*, and no *men*, that they are to be justly rejected as palpably counterfeit and fictitious; Of the same mind is *Jerom*, *Chrysostom*, and *Epiphanius*; and when *Celsus* alledged some absurd Stories out of those writings in reproch to the *Christians*; *Origen* in his fifth Book answers him by shewing what a mean esteem the *Jews* as well as the *Christians* then had of them. For the second, those *Pillars* of the Sons of *Seth*, 'tis beyond all compass of credit that any such *Pillars* should be set up with an intention to outlast the Deluge, or that they should so do, or that any Engravings upon them should be visible some thousands of years after, especially upon one of *Brick*; for *Josephus* tells us there were two at first erected one of *Brick*, and another of *Stone*, and that of *Stone* they made on purpose to last, if the other should decay (how he came to such an exact account of their minds the Reader may guess) and yet he sayes 'twas that of *Brick* that then remained, upon which he does not absolutely say there was any thing written in *Letters*; but *that the Sons of* Seth *Engraved upon them such things as they had invented*; which might be by many other representations, and other ways

ways then by Letters; for I doubt not but that a *Symbolical* repreſentation of mens thoughts one to another was extream early in the World, though they wanted *Alphabetical Letters*: Nor does *Joſephus* ſay, that *He ſaw* it it himſelf, or give any punctual account *what* it was that was engraven upon it, or any certain *Place* where the Pillar was to be ſeen, but only in general that it was then in the Countrey of *Syria* (where he left men of leiſure to enquire after it.) The truth is, there are ſo very many improbable and unlikely, if not impoſſible Circumſtances, do attend this vain Story, that 'tis plain *Joſephus* (though in the general a Hiſtorian of deſerved credit) took it upon bare report from others (ſome late Authors think, and perhaps not amiſs, from the fabulous relation of *Manetho*, who ſayes, he took his Hiſtory from ſome *Pillars* ſet up before the Flood and was marvailouſly abuſed in that Countenance he ſeems to give to it; nor ought it to ſeem ſtrange that he ſhould be ſo? for we find many of the beſt *Hiſtorians* have taken up things upon truſt, and fallen thereby into very great miſtakes. *Suetonius* and *Tacitus* are both eminent Hiſtorians amongſt the *Romans*, yet both guilty of ſtrange miſtakes *Tacitus* tells us in his *Hiſtory*, *That the Jews worſhipped an Aſſes Head with the higheſt veneration*; then

then which nothing could be more untruly, and upon less ground affirmed; and *Suetonius* so mistook that he thoughr *Christ* lived in the time of *Claudius*; for he sayes *In the time of Claudius, Judaos impulsore Chresto assidue tumultuantes civitate expulit*: That *Claudius expelled the Jews out of* Rome, *who were continually making uproars, being stirred up thereunto by Christ.* Then which there could not be an absurder mistake, nor a greater falshood well uttered. For the third, The mention that *Moses* makes in the 21 of *Numbers*, and the 14 of *the book of the Wars of the Lord*, as a Book then extant, his words are, *wherefore it is said in the Book of the Wars of the Lord, what he didin the red Sea, and in the brooks of* Arnon. First, divers probable senses are given of the place, that render it no Objection in this case. The *Geneva Translation*, not much differing from some others, renders it thus, *Wherefore it shall be spoken in the book of the* Battles *of the Lord*, &c. If so, then 'tis *Prophetical*, and may relate to *Joshuah*, who is said to fight the Battles of the Lord, and to the Relations in the books of *Joshuah* or *Judges* that were to be after. *Junius* reads the words thus; *Idcirco dici solet in recensione bellorum Jehovæ*, &c. *wherefore it is wont to be said in the rehearsal of the Wars of the Lord*, &c. And so understands it

it not of any particular book, but that amongſt the Wars that God diſpoſed for the good of the *Iſraelites* there was in thoſe times a famous mention in the mouths of moſt men concerning thoſe paſſages there expreſſed. *Paulus Fagius*, who ſeems to give the righteſt account of it, differs not much from this of *Junius*, only reads it in the *future tenſe*, and ſuppoſes it to intend a *future* relation, his words are, *Ideo dicetur* (*eſt enim verbum Hebraicum* והיוה *futuri temporis*) *in commemoratione bellorum, hoc eſt, cum bella Dei commemorabuntur, recenſebuntur a poſteris, quæ bella pro* Iſrael *in mari rubro geſſerit, & quæ ad hos torrentes: quaſi dicat, hi duo loci tanquam memorabiles ab omni poſteritate repetentur in quibus Deus pro* Iſrael *dimicavit, ubi prodigia Cœleſtia oſtenſa ſunt*; that is, *In the relation that ſhall be hereafter of the Wars of the Lord, there ſhall be a famous mention amongſt all poſterity, of what God did for* Iſrael *in thoſe two places*; whereſoever the Wars of the Lord are ſpoke of, what God did in thoſe two places ſhall have an eminent mention. The *Hebrew* word ספר *Sepher*, ſignifies properly any *rehearſal* or *enarration*, *recenſionem aut enarrationem quamcunq*; *recenſionem ſcriptam*; but *per accidens*. If we underſtand it not to relate to any Book, but only to a relation *Verbal* as it ſeems moſt probably

to

to do; because *Moses* speaks only of a rehearsal in generals but not directly of a *written* rehearsal, it reaches not this matter; and if it do, I see no good reason can be given why by that *Book* of *the Wars of the Lord* should not be meant either some succeediug *Book*, part of the *Bible*, or else that very Book of *Numbers* it self. But Secondly, which way soever this Text be taken, it can never be reasonably urged to prove there were *Letters* or *Books* before *Moses*; because 'tis said to be a Book relating a Story of things done in *Moses* his own *Time*; for those Wars called *the Wars of the Lord*, commenced but at the peoples coming out of *Egypt* under *his conduct*: And therefore 'twas impossible there should be a written story of them before *Moses* himself was extant. To the last Objection I Answer, 'Tis true that the *Egyptians* were a *Learned* people, probably the most learned the world then had. The continued *clearness* of their *Skye*, and the constant *overflows* of *Nile*, naturally tending to render them learned in those two Noble Sciences of *Astrology* and *Geometry*; yet there is not the least ground to believe they had any use of *Alphabetical Letters* before *Moses* his time, or any other way to express or communicate their learning, but what was *Symbolical* and *Hyeroglyphycal*; nor is there the least Record any where

where extant to evince the contrary. *Aristotle* sayes, The ancient way of the *Egyptians writing* was, *per Hieroglyphycas literas saxis incisas*; and he adds, *Conceptus animalium scribunt, uti occulata fide legimus in lapidibus per figuras; idem in omnibus Scientijs, Artibusq; facientes, quos locabant in Templis tanquam Paginas perlegendas, talesq; illis pro libris extant.* *Tacitus* tells us, *Primi per figuras Animalium* Egypti *sensus mentis effingebant, & antiquissima Monumenta memoriæ humanæ impressa saxis cernuntur.* *Diodorus Siculus* long before, in the fourth part of his *History*, has given us a large account of this *Symbolical* way of writing amongst the *Egyptians* and *Ethiopians*, which was reduced to these three heads, *Imitativa, Tropica, & Enigmatica*; nor do we hear a word of any other writing amongst them, till *Moses* his time, who in all probability first discovered to them that way of transferring their minds one to another by *Alphabetical Letters*. And this *Artapanus* a most ancient *Historian* tells us, who speaking of *Moses*, sayes, *Ut quasi Deus ab* Egyptijs *coleretur, & propter Literarum inventionem* Mercurium *appellatum*; *That he was reverenced by the* Egyptians *as a God, and for his first inventing of Letters called* Mercury.

The

The *Antiquity* of the *Bible* in point of fact being thus cleared, 'tis in the second place to be considered what Testimony to the *Divinity* of the *Bible* does in truth result from thence! And herein we shall find the *one* very remarkably leading us to the *other*. First in the general, 'tis a thing not to be denied that a reverence to *Antiquity* seems to have been universal; All men in all Ages seem to have risen up and payed respect to the Hoary Head of *Antiquity*: and that upon these two grounds; First, What is most Ancient, has undergone the greatest *Trial*: Every man is ready to venerate what has endured the *Test* of many Generations, and lasted through most Ages; because nothing corrects mistakes like *Experience*, nor distinguishes falshood and truth like *Time*; Time we say, and truly say is *Index*, as well as *Edax rerum*. Secondly, Every mans Reason tells him all *Secundary* truth must needs lie neareſt to the *Eternal* truth, and so be of greatest *Antiquity*. Error of every kind is of a *later Edition* then truth, an *Apostacy* from it, and a *Corruption* of some *prime Principles*. Though Error and falshood may be very Ancient, yet Truth is still the *Elder* Brother, and has this still to say to all its opposers, *Non fuit sic ab initio*: And therefore the farther we wade into *Antiquity*, the nearer still we come

to

to *Truth*. In Religion moſt eſpecially that Maxim prevails, *antiquitate nihil verius, veritate nihil antiquius*. In the preſent caſe the Antiquity of the *Bible* carries in it a very ſignal proof of its *Divinity*. That which is the moſt *ancient* Religion, is like to be the *Trueſt*; greateſt *antiqnity* in Religion, is an eminent mark of greateſt *Truth*, and that upon theſe two very forcable conſiderations; Firſt, 'tis reaſonable to believe, that there has been an intercourſe between God and Man ſince the *beginning*, and a *Supernatural* intercourſe ſince mans firſt *defection*, that Gods Revelations were as early as mans *neceſſities*. That there was no time wherein man ſtood in need of Supernatural Inſtruction and help, but that God affords it to him. If the ſuppoſal of Revelation in the general be reaſonable, (as I have proved at large it is) the other will follow, and we ſhall find good ground to believe, that there has been a Revelation from God ſince there was firſt Reaſon for it, and ſuch a conſtitution as *Supernatural Religion* in order to mans happineſs and recovery that bears an equal *Date* with his firſt *apoſtacy*, to think otherwiſe were to deny what the notion of Gods *goodneſs* very openly affirms to us. And this being ſo, no Religion can be *True* that is not clothed with great *antiquity*: And that Religion that is moſt

most *ancient*, and can derive it self from the *beginning* must needs be most *True*. The *Bible* therefore giving us Historically an account of Gods *first* intercourse with man, and of the constant continuation of it in all Ages, and being it self the *first* account that ever was given of Religion in such a *Written* way, upon all accounts the most *Ancient* the world has, and in its own *Antiquity* answering that *antiquity* we may justly expect to accompany Gods *First Revelations*, the *Bible* I say upon this account has a singular evidence given in to its Credibility, and its *antiquity* does strongly affirm its *Divine Authority*.

Secondly, The *Antiquity* of the *Bible* does point us to its *Divinity*, because 'tis not reasonable to believe that the *First Writen* account the world had of *Religion*, should be a *Cheat*, that the *First* eminent *Record* of *Religion* should be a *Lye*, and not only a Lye but the *Worst* of Lies, and the most *Pernicious* and *Destructive* falshood, (for so it must needs be to impose a Law upon the world in Gods name without his Authority) that ever was published amongst mankind. 'Tis not in the judgment of right Reason consisting with the Wisdom and Goodness of God to suffer the world to be Originally *Cheated* in point of Religion,

ligion: to ſuffer a publick open *Counterfeit* of his *Name* and *Authority* to the higheſt degree. *Firſt* to poſſeſs the world and take the *Precedence* of all truth: to permit the *Devil* to publiſh a Syſteme of *Lies* and erect a Monument of *Falſhood*, *Before* there was any written Record of *Truth*. We muſt needs ſuppoſe Gods care of Men, and the concern's of his own honour, to engage him to the contrary, and that God ſhould *Firſt* eſtabliſh his own Truth, to which mankind might ſtill have a recourſe, and by which as a *Standard*, all *Deluſions* and *Falſe Pretenſions* might be *Tried*. 'Twere, as one ſays well, very abſurd to think God ſhould permit the Devil to ſet up a *Chappel* before he had built a *Church*. If the *Bible* were originally compoſed by *Impoſtors*, and be not a Divine Book, 'twill then undeniably follow that the moſt *Primitive* and *Ancient* account we have of Religion is *counterfeit*, And that in the *Earlieſt* notices we have of God, of the worlds Original, Mans fall, and the way of his Recovery (for we have none ſo early as what the *Bible* gives us of any of theſe, and of ſome of them no other) the world is *Deceived* and *Abuſed*, and that God ſuffer'd the Devil in the firſt place, (and *before* any thing was publiquely extant from him to contradict it) in his name and

with pretence of his Authority, to *abuse* and *deceive* Mankind with a *false* and *delusive* account of all those things they are most concern'd to know, and upon the right Knowledg of which their present and future happyness does unavoidably depend. This very one consideration will prevail much upon every impartial judgment. Who can believe the *first* Religion should be the *worst*, when *True* Religion must needs be as old as the World? And the *Earliest* notions of God the *falsest*, when we must needs think it reasonable that God should reveal himself to the World from the *beginning*? Or that the *first book* we find writ should contain the *Highest imposture* in point of Religion, and more dishonour God and abuse the World then any or all the Books written since? 'Tis a thing beyond all compass of credit, That God should suffer *false informations* to be given in his own Name of himself and his own Revelations from the first beginning of the World for about 4043 years (for about so long a time it was from that first intercourse between God and Man the Scripture gives us Historically an account of till the last *Revelation* of St. *John*) And that this account should begin with the *first book* that the world had, and be gradually carried on into such a complete Systeme

ſteme as now we ſee it is, in a Written way, by ſeveral hands, in ſeveral Ages, for a thouſand and ſix hundred years together (for about ſo long a time it was from *Moſes* his firſt Writing to St. *Johns* Cloſing the *Bible*) Nor is it ſuppoſable that the vileſt *falſhood* for ſuch is the *Bible* if it be not from God (a Religion whereby (if it be falſe) God would be more diſhonoured, and men more deluded then by *any* that ever was yet extant) ſhould have this to ſay in its juſtification, *That 'tis of all others the moſt Ancient, and has been longeſt laſting amongſt Mankind.* The conſideration therefore of this *Book* in the *Time* of its conveyance, the *Antiquity* of it in reſpect of the matter it contains, and the *Antiquity* of it ſelf, as a *Book* written *long before* all others, and of ſo *early* a *Date* in the World, does with great Evidence point us to its *Divine Original*, and very ſtrongly tends to perſwade us that *God* himſelf was the *Author* of it.

Secondly, The *way* and *manner* of this Books conveyance to us. The *Method* of Gods thus Recording his pleaſure has been ſuch, that we ſhall find we have all thoſe reaſonable inducements (and in ſome reſpects more) to credit it, upon which we receive any *Humane Authors*, and acquieſce in them as true: And all ſuch farther Evidence as we can well

expect to insure us of the truth of a Book that pretends to come from God and be *Divine*. And this will appear to be so, if we consider, first, the *Instruments* God imploied in the writing of it, and such humane Circumstances as attended their doing it. And Secondly, The Divine witness *God himself* has in the most eminent way, given to this Book in its conveyance, to ascertain us of the truth of it, and of the sincerity of those that wrote it.

First, If we consider the *Pen-men* of this Book, those *Amanuenses* God made use of for the writing of it, and such Circumstances as attended their doing it. How unlikely a thing is it that they either did or could abuse the world in this matter, if we reflect upon these several things. First, the unblemished *Credit* and *Reputation* of these Writers. Secondly, the several *Qualifications* and *Qualities* of them. Thirdly, their *Interests* as moral and reasonable men. Fourthly, their Number, and that great distance of Time in which many of them wrote one from another. For the first, Nothing we know does more credit Ancient Authors, then the *good Report* of those Ages wherein they lived transferred to posterity. Not one of those Holy Pen-men God imploied in writing the *Bible*, was (that ever we find upon

upon any good grounds) tainted in Reputation or convicted of any sort of *Impostor* in their own or future ages, but were men of acknowledged Integrity and Sanctity in those times wherein they lived, and very many of them gave the highest Testimony to their integrity, in becoming *Martyrs* in justification of what themselves writ. For the Second, the various Qualities and Conditions of these Writers seems much to secure us against so vile a design as this book must needs be composed with, if it be not from God. Some of them were Kings, and men of the greatest quality before they writ, and not very likely to be guilty of so much *baseness* and *meanness* to carry on such a work, and also men of deepest Learning and Knowledge: Others of them, many of the *Prophets*, and most of the *Apostles* were men Illiterate, and of Parts and Education so *mean*, that they seem no way *capable* to write so profoundly, to lay so *deep* a Contrivement of mischief, or by the single strength of their own abilities to bid so fair to delude the World. 'Twere strange to Imagine men of such distant qualities and different abilities should *all agree* in the *same Imposture*, and so *Harmonize* as we find they do in the promotion of it. Thirdly, If we consider the *Interest* of these Writers as they were *Reasonable Men* (for so we must

needs suppose them, and to act upon the same inducements that Mankind do in all other things) No man could reap any *advantage* by *counterfeiting* this Book, nor could the Composers thereof design any *Earthly* or *Heavenly Good* to themselves as a Recompence for such an undertaking: not *Heavenly*, for 'twere the highest *Offence* against *God*, and meriting the highest *Punishment*: Nor *Earthly*, and that upon these two Grounds. First, because the tendency of the Book throughout is to *mortifie* mens Earthly *ambitions* and *appetites*, and to propose a happiness of another Nature as mens great *Interest*, and relating to another *World*; and no man of commou discretion that designed to greaten himself here, would choose to become the Author of *such* a *Doctrine* in order to it; because every step he advanced that way would visibly betray an Apostacy from his own Principles, and render him an open Impostor, meriting the scorn and contempt of all Mankind. Secondly, The most of those that God imploied in that work actually exposed themselves by the doing of it to all the *Persecutions*, *Hazards* and *Contempts* imaginable; And some of them as amongst the Prophets *Isaiah*, *Jeremiah*, *Amos*, and *Ezekiel*, and all the Apostles (according to what our *Saviour* foretold them) as *History* assures

assures us, save only the *Apostle John*, with the *loss* of their own *Lives* published their Doctrine. 'Tis a thing greatly ridiculous to imagine so many men, in so many Ages, should *agree* to *cheat* the World to no other end but their own certain *ruine* both in this world and the *next*. What end could many of the Prophets have in those unwelcome Messages they brought to those Ages wherein they lived, and for which they knew beforehand they should meet with so much ill usage? No man can be so sottish to think *Jeremiah* designed to himself any *Interest* in this world, when he prophecied himself into the *Dungeon*, and at last into his *Grave*. Or that the *Apostles* designed greatness or happiness here when they knowingly exposed themselves to all the *rage* that was then upon Earth, and endured the shock of all that *fury* which either *Jews* or *Gentiles* or the whole *World* together could execute upon them. He that reads the Story of St. *Paul* must needs suppose him to act beyond the bounds of all folly and madness, and not like a man either capable of instructing or abusing Mankind, if he intended any thing in this world as his *End*. The Motives of those Holy Writers in what they did, cannot with any Colour of Reason be judged to be other then pure obedience to God, love to truth, and preferring

ring a Reward *hereafter* above their own lives, and all enjoyments *here*. How highly did they preach up obedience and submission to Magistrates, when all the Rulers upon Earth were their most bitter Enemies! And that Doctrine could have no other effect but to bring their own Heads to the Block. The Authors of the *Heathen superstitions* were of a very different *Genius*. And as one sayes well of them, *Certè Authores superstitionis inter Gentes, omnes sibi & suis semper conciliarunt Dignitatem.* Nor is there any part of the *Bible* written by any of them with any the least shew of intention to greaten or advance themselves thereby: But on the contrary, many of the most eminent of them have themselves Recorded their own great *failings* and *imperfections*, as well *secret* as *open*: They all appear to be themselves under a subjection to the Doctrine they taught (which plainly declares they were inspired from above) and no way Masters of it as a Creature of their own. Throughout the whole Book there is a visible Antipathy to all self-seeking, flattery, or compliance: God alone is exalted, and all mens persons, Actions and reputations are openly *Postponed* to his honour, and put in subjection to those Holy and excellent truths there delivered. *Moses* of all the rest seems the greatest gainer in this world, because

'twas

'twas neceſſary at that time God ſhould raiſe up a leader to his people, yet 'tis plain he had no deſign for himſelf; for he pronounceth a grievous *curſe*, and a ſore *Judgement* upon his own *Tribe*, the Tribe of *Levi*, rejects his own poſterity, leaves them to the condition of common *Levites*, ſets up *Joſhuah* to ſucceed him, and places the *Kingly ſuperiority* over that people in *another Tribe* from his *own*, the Tribe of *Judah*; and himſelf while he lived attained to no more, but to ſpend his days with great *trouble*, amongſt a murmuring mutinous people in a weariſome *Wilderneſs*.

Fourthly, The *Number* of thoſe Writers and the great *diſtances* of *Time* may of them lived in from the other, does as probably ſecure us againſt any Humane contrivement in the compoſure of this Book as we can reaſonably expect. The world affords not an inſtance, that ever ſo many *Men* that lived in ſo many ſeveral and *diſtinct Ages*, ſo exactly agreed about *any one thing*, much leſs to *cheat* and *abuſe* the *World*, and carry it on in ſuch a continued written way: Never any ſuch thing was done in any kind; nor is it ſuppoſable upon the grounds of common Reaſon that ever any ſuch thing ſhould be: 'Twere ſtrange it ſhould be done in a matter of higheſt concernment, wherein Gods Honour & mans welfare are to the utmoſt

utmost engaged; that such a number of Impostors should be at several distant times for fifteen or sixteen hundred years together in contriving and composing such a Book as the *Bible* is, to delude and deceive the World, and that in all that time there should be no palpable discovery made of them, nor they themselves should so trip in the doing it, as visibly to shame their own undertaking, and betray those corrupt and rotten principles upon which they proceeded. As 'tis highly improbable that such a number of men, living at such distances of time, should all agree in the *same design*, and the same way of promoting it, (and *agree* they must; for 'twere absurd to imagine it could *happen* so to be by *chance*) because most parts of the *Bible* have been still written with a reference to things *future*, and no man that writ any one part could at that time know that others in future Ages would justifie what he said, and take up the design in a right nick of time, just where he left it, and so still carry it on; and yet this must still so come to pass, if the *Bible* were written by any Humane contrivement. *Moses* could not humanely foresee, That so many *Prophets* would arise in so many after Ages, to justifie, explain and carry on what he at the first writ; nor could *Moses* or those *Prophets* know any thing of

of the coming of *Christ* and the *Apostles* so exactly to fulfill the whole. And yet all this, and all things relating to the *Bible*, have come as punctually to pass, as if all those persons that writ the *Bible* had lived at one time, had all *talked together*, and perfectly agreed the whole business before one word of it was written. Nay *Moses* is so *explained* and *justified* by the *Prophets*, and both in such a way explained and *fulfilled* by *Christ* and the *Apostles*, *Promises* and *Prophecies* are in such a manner made good, fulfilled and interpreted, as seems utterly beyond the reach of all humane skill and contrivement, supposing all the Writers had lived at one time, had all consulted together, and with their utmost abilities laboured to bring it so to pass. What Humane skill can we reasonably conceive could have contrived such a gradual fulfilling throughout the whole *Bible* as now we see of that promise, *That the Seed of the woman should bruise the Serpents head?* What Humane Artifice can we conceive could have contrived such a Prophetical Prayer as *Gods perswading* Japhet *to dwell in the Tents of* Sem, with such a fulfilling of it, as that after the World had been *Canton'd* (in Ages then to come) into *Jew* and *Gentile*, from their posterity both *Jews* and *Gentiles*, who were in the highest enmity each to other, should incorporate

corporate into *one faith*, and become *one* under the Gospel by an united subjection to one common Head? and so in many others of the like Nature. And indeed no man that is not bereft of his wits can Imagine, that any company of Impostors could have been the Authors of such a projection as the *saving* men by *Jesus Christ*, which is the main and grand design of the whole *Bible*, or could have contrived such remote obscure promises of it at first, and such gradual and stupendious fulfillings of those promises after. 'Tis not, I say, only highly improbable that such a number of men living in such distant Ages, should agree to write such a Book; but 'tis unreasonable to Imagine, that admitting they had so agreed, yet that they could have produced such a book as the *Bible*, or that a Book so consisting with it self, could have been at such remote distances of time contrived by the cunningest Heads of any wicked Impostors whatsoever. Nothing less then a Divine and Heavenly Wisdom could have guided so many hands as writ the *Bible* in so many Ages into such an admirable agreement, and punctual correspondency with themselves. 'Tis not easie to find an agreement between men of the same sect and opinion in any one Age, or to find any one man in his own writings, if he write much,

exactly

exactly agreeing with himself; But to see so *many* men, in writing such a Book as the *Bible*, so harmonizing together as there they do, is of singular consideration: Throughout the whole Book we find these Writers still proceeding and building forward till the Top-stone is layed, without rejecting any thing, all things *compleated*, and *fulfilled*, never any thing *denied*, *Contradicted*, or *destroyed*, but we still see a rare use of every part relative to the whole, and such a fabrick intirely reared, without the least part Mis-placed, or any cause seen to entertain a second thought or to Alter. Of which no instance can be given in the promoting of any humane Science whatsoever.

'The Harmony we find in this Holy Book is of great Remark, upon these three accounts. First, 'Tis a harmony that results from exceeding *Different Styles*, and the greatest *Variety* of *Matter*. 'Tis not so many mens bare agreement together upon any *few plain points*, but tis *so many* mens agreeing together who have writ *Historically*, *Prophetically*, *Doctrinally*, with wonderful variation both for Matter and Manner of all the *Sublimest notions* the minds of men are capable of, as well as of the plainest truths, of things in *Heaven*, in *Earth*, in *Hell*, of all sorts of things relating to God and Men, and of the whole busi-

ness

ness of this World, and the next. Secondly, 'Tis a harmony resulting from an involved *Correspondency* of the *parts* one with another, and of every part with the whole (now we see it conjoyn'd) in such a way, as could not be foreseen or contrived by any humane wisdom in the writing of any *one* distinct part. There is in the *totum compositum* of the *Bible* such a peculiar *Oeconomy* relating to the whole, in the conjunction of all the parts, and likewise such an united consent in all the parts when together (relating to their conjunction) in all the Doctrines, Prophecies, Promises, Types, Histories, to promote the same thing, and such a Dependency each upon other in order to it, the whole in its connexion is so issued into one great and common end, as must needs argue a further and greater design in producing the whole, then what any Individual Men could possibly have at several distant Times in writing the particular Parts. Thirdly, 'Tis such a harmony as has been and still is dayly more and more *discoverable* to us by the Accidents of Time, And the products of Ages and Generations have *shewed* us much of it, that lay *hid* and we knew not of before. The more *experience* we have of this Book the more we find it at *unity* with it self, and the more we *search* into it the deeper *harmony* still

ſtill we diſcover: Every *Age* proves a freſh *Interpreter*, and the ſucceſſive *Revolutions* of this whole world *reveal* to us more and more of its rare and admirable *Concord*, and we come to find things that ſeemingly moſt *diſſo'd* in the higheſt and ſafeſt *agreement*; Which, when we conſider by how many ſeveral Pens, and at how many ſeveral and diſtant times, this Book was handed down to us, could not be the effect of any *Humane Artifice*, nor is it a thing that any Writers by the ſtrength of their own abilities could poſſibly in their own Times deſign or provide for. Nor can we ſuppoſe it the effect of any other cauſe but an *Infinite Comprehenſion* and *Foreſight*: And that the Writers of this Book were in all times guided in what they wrote by the *Supreme Wiſdome* of that *one God* who is *conſtant* to *himſelf* and the *Same* for ever.

This conſideration of the Pen-men God made uſe of for the Writing of this book, and thoſe Humane circumſtances that attended their doing it, goes thus far, That there is at leaſt as much (if not More) Ground to believe this book upon that ſingle account, as there is to Receive any other Humane Authors we are moſt ſatisfied in: Indeed as rational inducements to credit thoſe men that wrote the *Bible*, conſidering Who they were

that

that wrote it, and how, and when, and upon what Termes they wrote it, as to credit any other Authors we least doubt of; And if so, these two things will follow upon it; First, That he that rejects the *Bible*, obliges himself to believe *no other books* without apparent disingenuity? Secondly, He that does credit the Authors of this book with the same credit wherewith he credits other Authors, and supposes they were men of common honesty that would not knowingly write an untruth, cannot then refuse to receive it as a book *Divine* and *Infallible*, upon as good termes of credibility as he believes any the best humane Author in its Kind to be True, because they themselves tell us that it is so, (which were it otherwise without most impudent falshood they could not do) that God himself inspired them to write it, That 'twas no product of their own, but that every part of it is the genuine Dictate of the *Holy Ghost*.

But in the second place, in the *manner* of this books conveyance we shall find a further and more unquestionable ground of satisfaction, and a *Divine witness* given by *God himself* to the Truth of these Writings, to assure us beyond all reasonable doubt, they were written by men that did not deceive us, but such

as

as were Intrusted by *himself* for that purpose; And that is the *miracles* that were wrought, and which visibly accompanied their first publication. In the discoursing of which after a due sort, these three things will naturally fall under consideration. First, the *Nature* of a *Miracle* in general, what properly it is! Secondly, What evidence we have for the *Fact* of those Miracles we say the Scriptures are justified by! Thirdly, Whether *Miracles* simply in themselves are always an unquestionable proof of that Doctrine they are wrought to confirm, and an infallible justification of the integrity of the persons that work them! The two first are of an easy dispatch, the difficulty rests in the Latter.

For the first, A *Miracle* is properly that which can have no second cause for its Author, such a thing as no created Power in the judgment of reason can effect. Raising men Dead, curing diseases by speaking a Word, being able in a moment to speak all Languages, are things that exceed the bounds of all Natural Ability and such things as can be only related to God as effects of his supreme and unlimited Power: And such is a *Miracle*. Secondly, For the *Fact* of those Miracles we claim in defence of the Bible, we are much eased of the labour of proof from a General

Concession: And 'tis of great remark, That the Warmest Adversaries, the Scriptures have met with, have never denied the Fact of those Miracles pleaded in their behalf, but indeavoured to invalidate their testimony some other way; Neither the Miracles of *Moses* (which we find often mentioned in *Heathen Story*) nor of *Christ*, are denied by any in point of Fact, but both fathered upon *Egyptian Magick*. Those of *Moses*, by the Heathens heretofore, as we find in *Pliny* and *Apuleius*. *Pliny* says *There is a very great Magick depends upon Moses and the Cabala* (Though he might have remembred that never any Law so positively forbad Magick as did that which *Moses* delivered) and those of our *Saviour* by the *Jews* and the *Heathens* since; The *Jews* affirmed that all that our *Saviour* did was done by a *Magical skill* he first learnt in *Egypt*, and brought with him from thence; And *Julian* the Heathen says that *Peter* and *Paul* were the most expert men in *Magick* that ever lived, and that *Christ* himself wrote a *Book* of that *Profession* and *Dedicated* it to *them two*. Our *Saviours Miracles* in point of Fact are not only acknowledged by the *Jews*, but expresly both by *Celsus* and *Julian* (two of the most Learned, Malicious, and Industrious Adversaries that ever opposed the *Christian-profession*)

on) And this we may see in *Origen*'s second book against *Celsus* (of whose works there is nothing left but what is there repeated) and *Cyrill's* sixth book against *Julian*. And in truth the *Miracles* of *Christ* and the *Apostles* and those that succeeded them in the *Christian-church* were in Fact so many, so eminent, so visible, lasted so long (for in the Church for three hundred years in some measure they lasted) and the Relation of them has descended down to us by such a Constant Uninterrupted Written and Unwritten Tradition, that no man has yet assumed Impudence enough publickly to Gainsay them.

For the Third, Whether *miracles* simply in themselves are always an unquestionable proof of that Doctrine they are brought to Confirme and an infallible justification of the Persons that work them? I answer, In the general they are not. If the Doctrine be no way Destructive to those Natural notions of God we are born with, If it be not evidently to our Reason *Dishonorable* to Him, tending to seduce us from him, and opposite to that Natural Duty we owe him, They *are*. But if otherwise, if they come in direct Competition with the Law of Nature, They are *not*. No *Miracles* whatever can or ought to oblige me to what my Judgment Dissents

from as sinful: And that upon these two grounds; First, The Law of Nature as 'tis *Previous* to all Laws, so 'tis an *unrepealable* Law, because tis so perfectly the Result of my Reasonable *self* that should God contradict it he would cease to deal with me as a Rational Being, which is not upon any account to be thought. Secondly, 'Tis not against Reason to suppose a possibility that God may in some cases exert a supernatural power by ill instruments for *Trial* as well as *Establishment*. God has no where told us that he will not so do, nor do our own faculties *Recoile* against it and adjudge it *unreasonable* that God should exercise the world with such a Trial, if he afford means sufficient to Oppose and Resist it. Such who deny this Latter, and say that a Supernatural power in a way miraculous was never exerted but to confirm and establish a *Divine Truth*, that 'tis an Impeachment of Divine *Justice*, and most unreasonable to think the contrary, That although many things may be brought to pass by the *Devil* and *Ill men* that are in their own nature *Wondrous*, *mirandа*, and *mirabilia*, and utterly beyond the compass of our Reason to *conceive How* by any natural power they should be effected, yet they are not *Miracula*, they are still either natural effects proceeding from natural causes,

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opinion of ſuch I diſſent, and that upon theſe
four Grounds. Firſt, That which they ſay
does no way anſwer that end for which they
themſelves intend it. Secondly, 'Tis againſt
plain Texts of Scripture. Thirdly, 'tis againſt
great evidence of Hiſtory. And fouthly, Be-
cauſe the admiſſion of the contrary is no way
Deſtructive to thoſe natural notions we have
of Gods attributes, and his providential Rule
over the world.

Firſt, What they ſay does not anſwer
that end for which they themſelves intend it.
For if God ſuffer the Devil to exert a natural
power in ſuch a *way* that to the beſt exerciſe
of my *Senſes* and *Reaſon* it *ſeems ſupernatural*
and *miraculous*, tis all one to me as if it *really*
were ſo, and to my Judgment muſt needs be of
the ſame prevalency with a *miracle it ſelf*, nor
have I the leaſt way to help my ſelf, if I am
bound ſimply to ſubſcribe to whatever is at-
teſted to by a Miracle, and look no further;
For that muſt needs go for a Miracle with me,
which to my ſenſes and reaſon ſeems ſo to be.
And tis evident ſuch who make thoſe Diſtin-
ctions, do themſelves thereby ſubject the wit-
neſs of a Miracle to the Doctrine tis brought
to confirm; For if thoſe they call *Miranda*

and *Mirabilia* be in all outward appearance as true *miracles* (as they are acknowledged to be) they would then have been so called, and that distinction had never been made, had not the Doctrines they are severally brought to confirm been adjudged a ground sufficient to Create the distinction. He that tells me 'tis not fit to suppose, as not consistent with the Justice of God, that in a way *Supernatural* and *miraculous* any witness should be given to a Doctrine *false* and *corrupt*, and yet tells me the Devil and Ill men are often permitted without any means left of conviction by a power meerly natural to erect such a *counterfeit* of it, that to the best Senses and Reason of Mankind, is not discoverable, first must needs barely suppose the counterfeit, and next say nothing at all to salve the Justice of God about that matter.

Secondly, 'Tis against plain *Texts of Scripture*, *What* the *Magicians* did in *Egypt* in opposition to *Moses* seems to be plainly and undeniably *miraculous*; *turning Rods* into *Serpents*, *Waters* into *Blood*, and bringing forth multitudes of *Frogs* out of the Waters by stretching out the Hand with a Rod in it, cannot be reckoned otherwise: And *Pharaoh* and the *Egyptians* were satisfied they did the same thing in those kinds that *Moses* did, having the same

ſame exerciſe of their Senſes and Reaſon about both, and were hardened thereupon. And that what *Moſes* did in thoſe particulars, was *miraculous*, is plain; for God ſayes to him in the 7th. of *Exodus*, when he firſt ſent him to *Pharaoh*, *When* Pharaoh *ſhall ſpeak unto thee ſaying, Shew a miracle for you, then thou ſhalt ſay unto* Aaron, *take thy Rod*, &c. And in the 105 *Pſalm* thoſe things done by *Moſes* are ſpoken of as *miraculous*, and in the 27 *Verſe* called *The Signs and Wonders which God ſhewed in the Land of* Ham; of which 'tis expreſly ſaid in *Exodus*. *The Magicians did the ſame.* In the 13 of *Deut.* we find there by Gods direction a Caution given, *If a Prophet ariſe, or a dreamer of dreams,* [that is, one pretending to ſee Viſions, or one that ſpake only from dreams, which were an inferiour ſort of Prophets that ſaw things more obſcurely, of which kind ſoever it was] *and ſhall give thee a Sign or a wonder* [any Miraculous or Supernatural thing the word ſignifies] *and the Sign or the Wonder come to paſs, If he ſay let us follow ſtrange gods which thou haſt not known, Thou ſhalt not hearken to him; for the Lord your God proveth you*, &c. In the new *Teſtament* our *Saviour* tells us in the 24 of *Matthew*, of *falſe Prophets that ſhould ariſe and ſhew*, σημεῖα μεγάλα καὶ τέρατα, *great Wonders and miracles, even ſuch as if it were poſſible would*

deceive the very Elect. And in the 13 of the *Revelation* we read of *another Beast rising up, that doth great Wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from Heaven on the Earth in the sight of men, and deceiveth them that dwell on the Earth by Reason of those miracles which he hath power to do in the sight of the Beast.* And in the 19 *Chapter*, we are told of *the taking of the false Prophet, who wrought miracles* ὁ ψευδοπροφήτης ὁ ποιήσας τὰ σημεῖα. And in the same Book we read of *the Spirits of Devils working miracles.*

Thirdly, 'Tis against great Evidence of *History*; for though I doubt not but that for the most part the World has been abused and deluded with pretensions this way, which we have good Reason to think, when we consider what a superiour power to what is amongst men the Devils have by their Angelical Nature, and what strange and secret operations there are in Nature it self, of which we can give yet no better account in many things, for ought I see, then *Aristotle* did long since, when he derived them from invisible Causes, that he called *Occult qualities*; and also when we consider how the World in all Ages, has generally doted upon the Art and Practice of *Magick*, the Reason of which *Pliny* sayes was not only because such strange things were brought to pass by it; but because there was also a concurrence

currence in it of three such eminent Sciences, as *Physick*, *Mathematicks*, and *Religion*, yet 'tis no way reasonable to reject *all* the account we have in *Story* of *Supernatural* and *Miraculous* things that were brought to pass in the *Heathen World*. Nothing more frequent in History then relations of such things, it seems an unreasonable resistance of Historical Evidence, to think there was *nothing real* of that kind, that there was *nothing supernatural*, in all the business of *Esculapius*, or *Iarchas*, so famous amongst *Indian Brachmanes* in the times of the *Apostles*, *Tespesion* amongst the *Gymnosophists* of *Ethiopia*, *Simon Magus* of whom we have such strange *Stories*, and most especially *Apollonius Tyaneus*, who liv'd in the time of *Domitian*, though I easily grant much of what they all pretended to was visibly but a *Counterfeit* of it; nor can I wholly disbelieve what I find in the *Roman Story* about *Clauda Vestalis*, *Tucia*, and other of the *Vestal Virgins*, nor many other reports I find in credible Authors about such things: especially that Story of *Vespasians* curing a *lame* and *withered Thigh*, *by treading upon it*, and a *Blind man in* Egypt *by spitting upon his Eyes*; of which latter Cure *Tacitus* and *Suetonius* (Historians of great Credit) both gives us a very full and perfect account, and very exactly agree in the Circumstances of it; and as

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Dr. Jackson says in his Book upon the *Creed*, both those Cures were well known to the most Judicious *Roman writers* of those times, and so constantly avouched by them, as can leave no place (sayes he) for suspition in Ages following.

Fourthly, The admission of the contrary is no way destructive to those natural notions we have of Gods Attributes, and his providential Rule over the World; because God never puts men under any rational necessity by it to credit a falshood. He never permits men to be exercised with any such Trial, but when there is Evidence sufficient accompanying it to assure us 'tis but a Trial of our stability, and so intended. 'Tis no way unreasonable to suppose that God who is infinitely wise, and above us in the ways and Methods of his Supreme Rule, should for Holy and excellent Ends we cannot reach, exercise the World with the greatest Trials, even Trials from an appearance of his Almighty power, so long as he still affords a plainly Superiour Evidence to Truth, and so Circumstantiates things that there is abundant ground of distinction. To make this appear is of chiefest concern in discoursing of this matter, how *Gods Miracles* can be an *infallible Evidence*, if the *Devil* and *Ill men* be sometimes inabled, (for so it is to be

be underſtood; for by no inherent power of their own can they do it) to act alſo in a *Supernatural* and *miraculous* way! for if a *miracle* by whomſoever wrought be not a ſufficient proof of any Doctrine 'tis wrought in confirmation of, 'twill then be ſaid the Teſtimony from *miracles* ſeems to to be much *Invalidated*, and Mankind to be left at great uncertainty about it.

That God, when he is pleaſed to eſtabliſh Divine truth to the world by the power of *miracles* does make that Teſtimony *unqueſtionable*, and clearly *Diſtinguiſh* the witneſs given by *His miracles*, from any witneſs the *Devil* or his *Inſtruments* can give by any either *ſeeming* or *real operations* of that kind, will very evidently appear theſe three ways. Firſt, from the *order* of his proceeding. Secondly, from the *manner* of his proceeding; and Thirdly, from the *matter* about which he proceeds. Firſt, God maks the *miracles* he works from Heaven an infallible Teſtimony by the *order* of his proceeding. He *primarily*, and in the *firſt* place *before* falſe Doctrine and worſhip can have any ſuch pretence, by the power of Miracles ſettles and fixes his own truth, and makes that ſo ſetled a Rule to us to try all other Doctrines by. God has been ever *beforehand* with the Devil and his Inſtruments in this kind:

kind: Nor have they ever been suffered to attempt the World this way, till truth was *First* so unquestionably setled, that there was abundant ground to secure unbyassed and unprejudiced men from any seduction, were the temptation to it never so great. This was the case at first under the Old Testament; God by most eminent and undeniable *miracles* from Heaven established the Doctrine and Worship published by *Moses*, and thereby fixed that as the great *Standard* and *Rule* of all *Religion*, *before* the *Devil* had ever attempted to impose any Systeme of his own upon the World in such a way; and *that* being so setled, *after-prophecie* was not to be judged of singly by a power of working Miracles (God himself had directed the contrary) but also by its *conformity* to that established *Rule*; and therefore if any *Prophet* arose, though attended with a Miraculous power, and indeavoured to introduce a Doctrine *destructive* to what was so *already* established, and to withdraw them from the worship of that God to whom by *Moses* his *Law* they were *Primarily* subjected, they were obliged *not* to hearken to him, but to reject his Doctrine as a vile and wicked temptation. And 'tis of great remark, and an eminent justification of Gods proceedings in this kind, that the *most* that ever the Devil was

was suffered to do, was at first in opposition to *Moses*, when he by a power of *miracles* came to settle that *Divine Law* (for never any false Prophet after could reach to do what the *Magicians* then did) and God in that very way, plainly, and openly, (to satisfie the World for ever after in this matter) determines the Cause against him; And *Moses* so far outwent the *Magicians* in a *Miraculous* way, that they were forced to this confession, *This is the finger of God.* By which expression seems not to be meant that this *particular work* of turning *Dust* into *Lice*, in which the *Magicians* failed, is an effect of a *Powr Divine* and *Supernatural*, and all that was done before, both by *Moses* and *us*, (which were works every whit as great) was done by a power meerly *natural*: But *This is the finger of God*; that is, *To stop us*, that now we have tried to do the like, we find we *cannot*, that we should be able to go no further, that our power of working Miracles should fail us, and be taken from us, and *Moses* should be still able to *proceed*.

So under the *New Testament*, the Gospel was first eminently established by uncontrollable *miracles*, as the great *Standard* and *Rule* of all future *Doctrines*. And acquaints us that there is no further Revelation to be expected, before the wonders and Miracles of Seducers

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were extant. And when God has, by a miraculous power, once unquestionably established his own truth, all pretences to Miracles, be they feigned or real they come too *late*. Truth is in possession, and by that all things are to be tried, and whatever is found opposite to it, is but reasonably to be reckoned as a *Trial* and a *temptation* only to *prove* us. The *Broad seal* of Heaven is already solemnly and openly set: And let the Devil bring what *shews* he can of the same impression, they are still to be rejected. And whatever the Devil has been at any time able to do of that kind, has been but this *second* hand work, and to seduce men from a truth *beforehand* unquestionably *established*, and to which there was Reason sufficient (whatever could be done to perswade to the contrary) for all men to adhere. And this made St. *Austin*, when the *Donatists*, much urged upon him in their justification, a power they had of working Miracles, to tell them, *The truth was that way fully setled before, and we had warning enough not to be seduced from the Orthodox Doctrine of the Gospel by any such pretensions.*

Secondly, The *manner* of Gods proceeding in his working of Miracles to ascertain the World, does sufficiently secure us against the danger of being seduced by *Impostors* that way, and

and any Miracles they can produce, if we consider; First, The grand *occasions* upon which God still works them. Of how vast concernment was the rearing up of both *Testaments*, and justifying the *descent* of *Christ* into *Humane Nature*. Secondly, The number of them, How far have Divine Miracles out-gone all others in that kind. Thirdly, The *Eminency of them*. Fourthly, The *Perspicuity* of them to all sorts of men. Fifthly, Their performance without the least outward *means*, wherein there might possibly lye a deceit. Sixthly, The long and lasting continuance of them. In all these respects are Divine Miracles differenced from all Diabolical Actings that way, which for the most part have been *fictitious* and discoverable so to be: and when real, comparatively but *few*, and in no sort bearing any proportion to any of these Circumstances, wherewith Divine Miracles have been openly accompanied. And 'tis also to be noted, that very many of those Miracles we are told of amongst the *Heathens*, admitting them true, were not wrought to confirm or justifie their *Religion*, but upon other occasions: often for ends concealed and wrapt up in the Counsels of God which we know not of, and sometimes for other ends then to establish their Religion visible, as it seems to be in the case of *Vespa-*

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sian, whom God had designed as his Minister to execute so many dreadful Judgments upon the *Jews*, and therefore would establish him by those extraordinary Actings in the possession of the *Roman Empire*, which with great difficulty, and against much probability to the contrary he obtained; and as *Suetonius* says of him after he had obtained it, wanted Personal Authority and Majesty to manage such a Dominion. A clear instance concerning this whole matter God gave us at first in the *Magicians* opposition to *Moses*; wherein he gave us to know, that although Divine Truth might by Miracles be opposed, yet the superiour Luster of his own Miracles should be so visible to all, as perfectly to silence and vanquish the rest, and both in *Number*, *Continuance* and *Quality* as then it was, the difference should be to every Eye obvious and apparent.

Thirdly. The *matter*, for the establishment of which Divine Miracles are ever wrought, affords us ground sufficient to distinguish in this case. 'Tis always a doctrine leading us to that God of whom we have a notion imprinted in our own Nature, revealing him further to us, and instructing us in all those Holy Virtues, and excellent ways of living, that most correspond to our Natural light, are most suitable

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to that natural Divinity we are born with, and evidently tends to make us moſt happy here, and conduct us to the higheſt reward hereafter. Whatever miracles we ſhall at any time ſee wrought, to juſtify a Contrary doctrine, my own *Reaſon* will reject as a *Temptation*, and aſſure me that in the one caſe a miracle is ſent from God to *Aſcertain* me, and in the other the Devil is only inabled in the higheſt manner to *Tempt* and to *Try* me. And theſe three ways in the caſe of miracles, are we ſufficiently ſecured againſt all the attempts that can be at any time made to ſeduce us that way: And may hereby reſt abundantly ſatisfied in the teſtimony of Divine Miracles, given to Divine Truth, by whatever ways the Devil ſhall be able to countenance and promote a Contrary Intereſt.

Now, That the Scriptures have been attended with Miracles in their conveyance, is not (as before is proved) by any denied. And that thoſe miracles have the advantage of all the foregoing circumſtances is likewiſe very evident. The Doctrine of *Moſes* is the *Firſt born* of all others, being the Religion that was from the *Beginning*. God, in the *firſt place*, ſetled and conſecrated That by a *miraculous Power*, before any other Syſteme of Religion was extant, and gave it therein

the *Precedency* of all false Prophets and Impostors and whatsoever Doctrines they should by that means oppose it withall. And so the New Testament being the natural product of the old, is by the miracles of *Moses* at the first, and those of our *Saviour* and the *Apostles* after (upon the validity of both which 'tis established) secured against all opposition that can that way be made against it to the end of the world.

Secondly, The *way* and *manner* of Gods working those miracles by which the Scriptures are justified to us to be his Words, has eminently distinguished them from all other operations of that kind. So 'twas in the times of *Moses*, when the Devil by the *Magicians* went further that way then ever he did after. How far did the miracles of *Moses* exceed His! *More* miracles! *Greater* miracles! More *Continued* miracles! *Undeniable* and *Uncontrolable* evidences of Gods Infinite and Almighty Power, in a way far superiour to what they could bring about! Under the Gospel the miracles have been such in the *manner* of their working, as leaves no room to doubt of Gods intention to secure us from Heaven thereby of the Truth of our *Saviour* and his *Doctrine*: If we consider, First, the grand *occasion* of them: To fullfil the Old Testament

ment and establish the New: And this by *Private men* (respecting the world) without the least clothing of *Humane Power* or *Authority*. Who can imagine less then that a *Commission* to *Christ* and the *Apostles* should be sealed from an Heaven in an extraordinary way, to assure the World of their *Authority* to do this? Secondly, The admirable *Nature* of those miracles, Raising dead persons, curing all sorts of diseases, commanding Winds and Seas, Vanishing in a moment out of the sight of multitudes. Thirdly, Their *Number*, being exceedingly Many, done in all places, and upon all occasions where they came. Fourthly, Their *Visibility*, openly seen and acknowledged by all present, by multitudes. Fifthly, Without the use of any Secondary *means*, or the least shew of Diabolical enchantments; And as one of the *Ancients* says *Sine ulla vi Carminum, sine Herbarum aut Graminum faccis, sine ulla aliqua observatione sollicita, Sacrorum, Libaminum, Temporum*, &c. All most frequent in *Heathenish Sorceries* and *Enchantments*. Sixthly, The Long and lasting *continuance* of them: Not only during the times of *Christ* and the *Apostles* (and one of them, the Apostle *John*, lived till *Trajan's* time, which was above a hundred years from *Christs* birth) but also for very many years

after, in the *Christian Church*. What miracles does the world pretend to, that can compare themselves with these miracles upon all or any of these accounts? No men, nor Devils ever did such works, nor in such a manner as these were. What lamentable and pitifull things are those of *Apollonius*, *Tyanæus*, *Esculapius*, or any others compared with These! And what a shameful and indeed Ridiculous Partiality does appear in *Hierocles* and *Porphiry*, who designing thereby to incense the *Emperours* against the *Christians*, who much justified themselves upon the power of miracles, and to bring them under persecution) have indeavoured to draw a Paralel between the miracles of *Christ* and *Apollonius*! We find by *Eusebius* that *Hierocles* (in a Book that is since lost) compared *Apollonius* and *Christ*; the *Evangelists* who wrote our Saviours Story and *Philostratus* the writer of *Apollonius his Life*, upon that account together, and preferred *Apollonius* and *Philostratus* before the other. But with what an unreasonable Partiality is easy to be seen by any that will consult *Eusebius* his *Answer* to him; One chief miracle *Philostratus* tells us off, was, that *Apollonius* sitting at meat, was served after a wonderful manner, with Men of *Brass*; And another is That an *Elme-tree* speak to him and

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Saluted him; with many other such things, which to every common understanding, appear at first sight, very capable of *Deceit* and *Delusion*. The *Sun* is not in Lustre more Superior to the *Dimmest Star*, then *Christs miracles* are to all Pretensions of that kind. Nor were there ever any operations either of men or of Angels visible in this world that with any colour of Justice and Truth can (all circumstances considered) be put in ballance with those eminently *miraculous actings* of *Christ* and his *Apostles*.

Thirdly, The *Doctrine* contained in the *Scriptures* which the *miracles* were wrought to confirme, and to assure us of the sincerity of those that delivered them to us, is most evidently from God, most corresponding to our Natural obligations to him, and is in it self directly opposite to the whole Corporation of Debauched and Evil men, destructive to all corrupt Doctrines and Practices whatever, and perfectly ruinous to the Interest of the Devil in this World, of which there needs no other proof but an appeal to the Judgments of all sober minded men. Never was there any Doctrine brought to light, so Holy, and so excellent. A Doctrine that has visibly the highest tendency to those two great ends of all Religion, the *Honour of God*,

and *Mans present and future happiness*. No Instance can be given of any particular Duty enjoyned Destructive to mans true happiness, but all perfective of it. The strictest self-denial has a Recompence proposed to us of a hundred fold in things of a far more Noble and excellent Nature, and most suitable in all such cases to a Rational choice. The result of the whole is this: Whenever Miracles are wrought to establish such a Doctrine as in the judgment of right Reason is likely to come from God, we are upon the highest and most unquestionable ground of Assurance that we can be. Whenever a Miracle is wrought to establish a contrary Doctrine, 'tis the highest *Trial*, But still God is pleased to order it so, that we have ground sufficient to oppose and withstand it, and reckon it onely as such. Whoever consults the writings of the Primitive *Christians*, will find there were two things upon which they chiefly insisted, and by the strength whereof the *Christian Religion* made its first Entrance, and travelled thorough a great part of the *Heathen world*: The Excellency of its *Doctrine*, and the *Miracles* wrought to confirme it; And these two conjoined give us the most infallible Assurance of Religion we are capable of in this World. The *Miracles* justify the *Doctrine*, and the *Doctrine* reflects

fects a Teſtimony back to the *Miracles*: and in that Conjunction the proof is Invincible. And ſo 'tis in this caſe of the *Bible*; For we can have no more then what we find here: The *Beſt Doctrine*, with the *Higheſt Atteſtation*. Whoever warily conſiders our *Saviours* Reaſonings with the *Jews*, ſhall find him going upon this Ground: For as he frequently juſtifies his *Doctrine* from his *Miracles*, ſo he likewiſe often juſtifies his *Doctrine* to be in it ſelf *Divine*, Correſponding to the Scriptures of the *Old Teſtament*, and in direct purſuance of what *Moſes* and the *Prophets* had taught: And ſo makes the teſtimony of his Miracles unqueſtionable thereby; For ſuch a Doctrine accompanied with ſuch miraculous Evidence, muſt needs be from God, and can admit of no Rational Oppoſition; And therefore, in diſcourſing this matter in hand, neither ought to be inſiſted on, neither the Doctrine nor the *Miracles*, *Diſtinctly* and *Separately* from the other, but *Both* urged in that excellent *Conjunction* in which they are handed down to us.

Thirdly, If we look upon this Book in the *Succeſs* and *Effects* of it ſince its Conneyance, We have from thence ſtill further evidences of its *Divinity*, and more Rational perſwaſions to derive it from *God*, as a *Book* of his own

Composing, and about which he has exercised a peculiar Care; And that upon these two Grounds. First, That this Book (though written at several times, all so long since past, and some of it before any other Books were extant) has yet, in its passage through so many Ages, escaped all the dangers to which it has been exposed, and is preserved intire to us to this day. Secondly, That this *Book* and the Religion contained in it has made its Entrance into the world, and gain'd an Acceptance amongst Mankind, in such a way and by such Means, as are *Peculiar* to it self, and no other Religion can make a Pretence to: In such a Way, as when we rightly consider it, 'twill seem Absurd and Ridiculous to all common Reason to suppose that the wickedest Counterfeit and the grandest piece of Imposture about God and Religion should ever be able so to do: Or indeed that any Book of Religion should upon such Termes arrive at such a Reception, but one that contain'd the Highest and most Evident Truths, and had the great God for its Author. For the first, 'Tis true that other Books very Ancient, and written long ago, as we have good ground to believe, have descended Intire to this very Age. But herein the passage of the *Bible* through the chanel of so many Ages, is Distinguish-

ſtinguiſhed from all other Writings, not only that 'tis, ſome of it, much Elder then they, and upon that account more liable to Loſs and Decay, but that no Book or Writing, the world was ever poſſeſſed of, has had that violent *Oppoſition* made againſt it, nor ſuch Deſigns formed for its *Ruine* and *Extirpation* as this has had; Others have met with a quiet and peaceable paſſage: This has been often beſet with moſt Keen and Inveterate Enemies: Beſides that great hazard ſo much of the *Bible* was in as then was Extant in the days of *Joſiah*, when for ought appears by the Story there was but one *Copy*, and that had been loſt for ſixty eight or ſixty nine years, and was hid either in the *Rubbiſh*, or elſe in ſome ſecret part of the Walls of the *Temple*, (for it was found when the Temple came to be Repaired) and in all probability was there hid during the wicked Reign of *Manaſſeh*, by ſome malicious *Idolaters*, with an intention utterly to extinguiſh it: Which might eaſily have been done in a way that had made it Irrecoverable, had not a *Divine hand over ruled* and *ſecured* it. Beſides this, and ſome other Hazzards the *Bible* has ſcap'd of a like nature, we read of two famous and moſt Implacable Enemies furniſh'd with all Humane power, that with all their might and skill have beſet it:

it: *Antiochus Epiphanes* under the *Old Testament*, and the *Emperour Diocletian* under the *New*. This *Antiochus Epiphanes* called likewise (and much more truely) *Epimanes*, the *Mad* and the *Furious*, was propheſied of and plainly foretold by the Prophet *Daniel* in the eighth and eleventh *chapters* of his *prophecy*: He there calls him *a King of fierce countenance*, and ſays *His heart ſhould be againſt the holy Covenant*, and that *he ſhould have indignation againſt the holy Covenant*: Which was the *Law of God*, the *Scriptures* then Extant. This *Antiochus* came in the times of the *Maccabees*, and moſt cruelly deſtroyed and waſted *Jeruſalem*, and made it his grand buſineſs to ruine the *Jews*, and utterly extinguiſh their whole *Religion* and *Worſhip*, Dedicated their *Temple* to *Jupiter Olympius*, Erected an Altar therein for the Worſhip of that *Idol*, and in contempt of the *Jews*, cauſed many *Swine* to be ſlain and offered up in ſacrifice to him, and as the ſureſt way to put a perfect End to the *Religion* of that Place and People, with utmoſt diligence made ſearch after their *Law*, and whereſoever he found it, immediately Burnt and deſtroyed it, and threatned moſt exquiſite torments and Death to any that ſhould dare to Conceal or Retain it; Of which *Joſephus* gives us the Relation at large, in the 12th. *Book* of his

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Jewish Antiquities. Some will needs imagine that *Antiochus* so far prevailed in this undertaking, that the Scriptures then Extant were wholly Destroyed; But the contrary is most evident and a special providence in their preservation sufficiently visible; For, no sooner was that storme over, but the *Bible* was every where publickly extant, having been particularly preserved by *Matthias* the Son of *Asmonaus* and his sons (who, as *Josephus* says, resolutely ventured their Lives in the doing it) and also by other good men, and was universally known in that Age amongst the *Jews* to be so. *Calvin* in the first *book* of his *Institutes*, observes, That though the *Jews* had undergone the malice of manifold Enemies on all hands, yet neither the *Loss*, nor the *Change*, nor the *Corruption* of their *Law*, was ever by their worst Enemies objected against them. And indeed, how great soever their enmity was against their Religion; yet they never denied but that *Moses* was the *Author* of it, and that the *Law* they had, was the *Same He delivered* at first. Under the *New Testament*, since the closure and completion of the Whole, What a furious Persecution did the *Bible* escape in the time of *Diocletian*! Who, after the grievous sufferings of the *Christians* in Nine sore Persecutions, assaults them about

bout the year 302 with the sorest and most cruel of all, and with a full purpose to root *Christianity* utterly out of the world, and destroy its very Name from the face of the Earth. *Eusebius* tells us that in the Nineteenth year of his Reign He publisht an *Edict* against the *Christians* and *Christianity* it self: In which he so much Gloried, that he caused a *Pillar* to be erected as his Memorial to all posterity, with this Inscription, *Diocleſiano Cæsari Augusto superstitione Christi ubiq; deleta. To Diocleſian the Emperour having abolished the superstition of Christ, all the world over.* By that *Edict* he commands that the *Christian-Churches* should every where be *demolished*, the *Christians* all *Seized* and *Imprisoned*: *Et quibuscunq; adhibitis Machinis, victimas Idolis immolare cogerentur. That by all sorts of means fair and foul, they should be brought to sacrifice unto his Idols*: And that the *Scriptures* should be every where sought for, *burnt*, and *destroyed*: And whoever Retained them should be most sharply *Tormented*. *Diocleſian* at this time had the command of the greatest part of the Habitable world; For, as one of the *Roman Writers* said, *Romanæ spatium est Urbis & Orbis idem.* The *Scriptures* were then but in *Written hand.* Men generally Quak'd with the fear of that Raging Tyrant: Very many Apostatized and de-

delivered up the *Bible* to his wrath, and were thereupon branded with the name of *Traditores* (of which, and of the whole buſineſs we might perhaps have had a larger account, had not *The Life of Deocleſian* written by *Euſthenius* his *Secretary*, been ſince loſt. For, As *Baronius* has rightly obſerved in his *Annalls*, We have now no Writer who did at that time Hiſtorically ſet down the Actions of that *Emperour*) Yet, God by his Providence, delivered this *Book* out of his hand, Diſappointed his fury, and ſuffered him not to quench the Light of theſe *Divine Laws*. The *Chriſtians* at that time Tired out the Inventions of their Enemies in finding out ways to torment them, and by their conſtant and patient ſuffering the utmoſt of humane miſery even wearied out their Executioners. One remarkable paſſage we have in *Euſeblus* that happened upon this occaſion: A noble man in *Nicomedia*, of eminent Quality, hearing this *Edict* againſt the *Chriſtians* and the *Bible* publiſhed at *Nicomedia*, After it was Read and openly fixed to a publick Pillar, in the preſence of *Diocleſian* himſelf, *Maximinius*, *Galerius*, *Conſtantius*, and other the Chiefeſt perſons in the Empire, (for 'twas uſual with the *Emperors* to come themſelves in Perſon with their chiefeſt Attendan s to hear their own *Edicts* againſt the *Chriſti-*

Christians proclaimed, to see the *Christians* tormented, and to make themselves sport with their miseries) this Noble man had such a zeal for the *Bible*, and the *Christian Religion*, that before the *Emperors* face he took down that prophane and impious *Edict*, and with a Holy indignation openly tore it to pieces, and and thereby willingly exposed himself to the utmost suffering the fury and rage of the *Emperour* could any way make him the subject of.

Two things are usually urged in diminution of the *Bible* and its Authority, upon a quite contrary account. We are told by some, The *Bible* has been so far from being preserved intire in the whole, or in its parts, that first all that part of the *Bible* that was then extant, when the people of *Israel* were carryed into *Babylon*, perished in the destruction of *Jerusalem* and the *Temple*, and that *Esdras* wrote it himself all over again upon their return, and that we have now so much of the *Bible* only from *Him*, and as *he Re-penned* it. In this *Mr. Hobs*, in the 33 *Chapter* of his *Leviathan* (where he has not failed to insinuate all such things as might gratifie men of *Sceptical* notions about the *Bible*) is very positive, and tells us, *The Books of the Old Testament are derived to us from no other time then that of* Esdras, *and were retrived*

retrived by him when they were loſt. And Secondly, we are told that many particular Books and Writings, penned by Divine inſpiration, and once part of the *Bible*, have been ſince conſumed by Time, and are now wholly loſt out of the World. The firſt, That ſo much of the *Old Teſtament*, as was then extant (which was the whole as we have it, ſave ſome part of the *Pſalms*, the *Prophecies* of *Ezekiel*, *Daniel*, *Haggai*, *Zachary*, and *Malachai*, and the Books of *Eſther*, *Ezra* and *Nehemiah*) was totally loſt, and all the *Copies* deſtroyed in the ruine of *Jeruſalem* and the *Temple*, is an aſſertion very weakly grounded: And there are very ſufficient Reaſons to perſwade us to believe the contrary. Firſt, Weakly grounded; for there is no other ground for it, but that in an *Apocryphal Book* that goes under the Title of *the fourth Book of* Eſdras (a Book every where ſtuffed with Childiſh and fabulous Stories) There we find this abſurd fiction, that *Eſdras* ſhould ſpeak unto God, and tell him, *Thy Law is burnt, and no man knoweth the things that thou haſt done*, and therefore deſired to be inſpired to write it all over again, and to write all that had been done in the World from the beginning: And that after he had been forty days and nights with God (in an apiſh fooliſh imitation of *Moſes*) and had taken a *Potion*

God

God had prepared for him, he dictated all the *Bible* over again to *five* men. Now, of how little credit this *Relation* (being no where found but in this Book) ought to be with any considering man, will appear, if we consider that this Book was not only constantly rejected as *Apocryphal* by the *Jewish Church*, as a *counterfeit* under *Esdras* his name, and none of his, but has been so by all sorts of *Christians* under the Gospel. St. *Jerom* calls it *a Book full of Idle dreams*. The Papists themselves, though they have admitted many other Books that we reckon *Apochryphal* into their *Canon*, yet have still rejected this; and *Bellarmine* himself, in his Book *de Script. Eccles.* speaks with great contempt of this whole Book: And calls the Author of it, whoever he were, *a writer of Romances*. Secondly, There are many very good and sufficient Reasons to induce us to believe the contrary. First, There is no where in any part of the Bible, the least mention (not by *Esdras* himself, though he gives us a large and particular account of what he himself did) of any such thing. And 'tis not conceiveable but so eminent a thing as *God's inspiring one man to write over again so great a part of the* Bible, *which so many had been inspired to write before*, would have been some where or other *Recorded*; nor

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is it credible but that so great a Judgment upon the *Jews* as the total loss of their Law, would have been distinctly mentioned, when the *Holy Ghost* is so very particular in giving us an account of all the losses the *Jews* underwent at that time, of all the ruines made by the *Babylonians* at *Jerusalem*, and of all the spoils they carryed into *Babylon* from thence. Secondly, 'Tis not to be doubted but that there were multitudes of *Copies* in the hands of the Religious *Jews*, especially the Priests (of whom there were many hundreds) who had a constant use of it: And that the *People* also did generally possess themselves of it after that eminent danger it had undergone, and the Recovery of it in the *Eighteenth* year of *Josiah*; And 'tis not to be supposed that all the *Copies* could be destroyed. Those that probably were in the hands of *Jeremiah*, *Gedaliah*, and many others who stayed behind and accepted their liberty to continue still in *Judea*, and those in the hands of *Daniel*, *Ezekiel*, and those that were carryed away with them in the first Captivity to *Babylon*, long before the *City* and *Temple* were burnt, and all those which were probably kept by many of those that were carried into *Babylon* after, especially if we consider, that we no where find that the *Babylonians* made it any part of their business

in particular to destroy and extirpate their *Law*. And when *Antiochus* did afterward with all his might indeavour it, by Reason of the many *Copies* that were extant in good mens hands, he was no way able to effect it. Thirdly, It appears the *Jews* had the *Scriptures* with them during the time of their Captivity in *Babylon*, both from *Daniels Prophecie*, who Prophesied there, and also from other Historical Evidence. First, From his Prophecie; for we find him in the 9 Chapter of his Prophecie quoting several times particularly the Writings of *Moses*: And in the beginning of that Chapter he sayes, *He understood by Books the number of years whereof the word of the Lord came to* Jeremiah *the Prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolation of* Jerusalem. And those Books could be no other but the Prophecie of *Jeremiah* it self, with other parts of the Scripture, and the *Records* of the *Kings* of *Babylon* (wherein were to be found the times that the *Jews* were brought thither) which *Daniel compared* together, and so found out the *End* of *Jeremies seventy years*, and of the *Captivity*; the difficulty in the doing of which arose from hence, that there had been four distinct Captivities, and four several Kings of *Judah* carryed into *Babylon*, at four several times; first *Manasses*, then *Jehojakim*, and

and with him amongst others *Daniel* himself; Thirdly, *Jeconias*, and with him *Ezekiel* and *Mordecai*; and lastly *Zedekias*, when the *City and Temple* were destroyed. And 'twas not a thing very easie to know, from which of these Captivities to reckon the *seventy years*. *Ezekiel* seems to begin it eleven years before the City was destroyed, when *Jechonias* was carryed away thither; for he sayes, *In the five and twentieth year of our being in Captivity, in the beginning of the year, in the tenth day of the month in the fourteenth year after that the City was smitten.* And the Prophet *Jeremie*, in comforting those that were carryed away with *Jecenias*, used these words, *Thus saith the Lord, after seventy years be accomplished in* Babel, *I will visit you, and cause you to return to this place*; by which he seems to begin the *seventy years* from thence; but in other places is very expres that the seventy years were to be accounted from the destruction of the City and Temple. And so it appears, the Captivity mentioned by *Ezekiel* was not that by which the seventy years were to be reckoned. Nor was the Prophecie uttered by *Jeremie* to comfort those that were captivated with *Jeconias*, to commence when uttered, nor till the destruction of the City, and the last Captivity of *Zedekiah*: All which *Daniel considered*, and by comparing these

Prophecies together, found the exact time from whence the *seventy years* were to be accounted. Secondly; From Historical Evidence; for *Josephus* sayes, the Reason why *Cyrus* set on foot the rebuilding of the *Temple*, and restoring of the *Jews* to their Countrey, was his reading the Prophecie of *Isaiah*, which was written 210 years before his time, wherein the Prophet foretells in Gods name, that *Cyrus* should be raised up for that very purpose; upon reading of which during the Captivity he sayes, *Cyrus* was ravished with admiration of God, and surprized with an ardent zeal to bring about what was so long before written. And tis highly probable that God made use of the *sight* of that *Prophecie* to engage *Cyrus* to what he did; for otherwise 'twas a thing in it self most absurdly impolitick, and against all ordinary Rules of discretion, to restore such a people, and rebuild such a place, that had been so famous and so terrible to all the Nations round about. Especially when as *Josephus* sayes, there went out of *Babylon* at their return, of those two Tribes of *Judah* and *Benjamin* there captivated *Four Milions six hundred twenty and eight thousand Persons that were above twelve years old*, besids *four thousand and seventy* Levites; and of their *wives* and *Children* together *forty thou-*

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and seven hundred forty and two: besides also some hundreds of the Tribe of *Levi*, that were *Porters*, *Singers*, and other *Sacred Servitors*. Fourthly, 'Tis not Imaginable that *Zerubbabel*, *Joshuah*, *Haggai*, and so many others of them would have so laboured as they did to return out of *Babylon*, to rè-build their Temple, and restore their Ancient Worship, if the *Law of God*, the great *Rule* and *Foundation*, of it had been wholly lost and extinguished. Nay, it appears evidently in the Book of *Ezra*, that those *Jews* that first returned into *Judæa* before *Esdras* came out of *Babylon*, brought the Law out of *Babylon* with them; for in the sixth of *Esdras* 'tis there said, *They set the Priests in their divisions, and the* Levites *in their courses, and setled the Worship of the Temple, according to the Law of* Moses (which we cannot conceive, after seventy years, they could so exactly have done, or would ever have attempted to have done it, had not they had the *Law* with them) while *Esdras* himself was yet in *Babylon*; and when *Esdras* did come to *Jerusalem*, we find in the 8th of *Nehemiah*, the people were so far from wanting the *Law*, or staying for any such *Restoration* or *Re-penning* of it by him, as is pretended, that they desired him only to *read* the *Law* openly to them, which he immediately did as a thing they were

then possessed of, and which was notorious amongst them. Fifthly, 'Tis no way probable that *Esdras* should so Re-pen the *Bible*; because we find his own writings full of *Caldee* words, as also the Prophecie of *Daniel*; but all that part of the Bible written before the Captivity, is in pure *Hebrew*; and 'tis no way conceiveable but that if he had *Re-penn'd* the *whole*, he would have written it in the same way he wrote his own Books, and according to the *Idiome* that was then in use amongst the *Jews*, either wholly in *Caldee*, or else with some mixture of *Caldee* and *Hebrew* together. The whole of this Story does evidently appear to be a *Romantick fable*, taken out of a Book stuft with many vain and ridiculous follies, and is contradicted by another *Apocryphal Book* of much better credit, if wee'l depend upon such Evidence; for in the second Book of the *Maccabees* we are there told that the *Tabernacle* and the *Ark* (in the sides of which the *Law* we know was placed) were secured by the Prophet *Jeremie*, and hid in a Cave at Mount *Nebo*, when *Jerusalem* and the *Temple* were burnt: And if any such thing were, though the *Law* be not particularly mentioned, yet being always kept in the *Ark*, 'tis not to be doubted but *Jeremie* preserved it with the *Ark*, and had an especial reference to the

the securing of it, in what he then did. This we affirm as a truth to which both *Jews* and *Christians* have assented, that at the return of the people out of *Babylon*, the care of *Esdras* about the *Bible*, and that great *Synagogue* that was then according to *Moses* his first institution assembled (in which were present *Haggai*, *Zacharie*; *Malachy*, *Nehemias*, and *Zerubbabel*) was very eminent and great; and to this day we derive singular advantages from it. For first, with great diligence they made an exact seperation between such Writings as were of Divine Inspiration, dictated by the *Holy Ghost*, and were to be a standing *Rule* to the Church in all Ages, and all other Writings whatsoever, whether written by true Prophets or false; for even true Prophets and such as were most eminent, might, (and without doubt, many of them did) write diverse things without any immediate assistance or direction from God, and consequently which were not of *Divine Authority*; they collected all the sacred parts of the *Old Testament* together, which during the Captivity lay dispersed in private hands, no publick use being made of them: Incorporated the whole into one intire *Volumn* (an admirable work) in the order we now have it, which before was not possible to be; for several *Psalms*, several of the

Prophecies, and some other *Books*, were written after the coming of the people into *Babylon*; and it does no where appear that those parts written before were conjoyned in one intire *Volumn*, more of them then the five Books of *Moses*, the *Original Copy* whereof *Moses* himself delivered in a publick assembly to the *Levites* to be layed up in the sides of the *Ark* (the peculiar *Archive God* had, by his special command appointed for it; the whole of the *Old Testament* so united, they ranked under three Classes, and divided into three parts; which division was continued amongst the *Jews* till the times of our *Saviour*, who in the 24th of *St. Luke* refers to it, when he sayes, *All things ought to be fulfilled which are written in the Law of* Moses, *the Prophets and the Psalms.*

Secondly, Their care in securing the *Original Text* of the Scripture was eminently great, and most highly is it to be applauded, in adding points to the *Hebrew Letters*, to preserve the Knowledge of the Tongue, and facilitate the reading and Learning of it, dividing the sacred Writings into *Verses*, with many other things of that kind, most probably first begun by them, of which the *Jewish* Writers give us a large account. The whole of their indeavours this way, and of those amongst the *Jews* that succeeded them therein, was called the

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Massora (which God wonderfully blessed to preserve the purity of the *Hebrew Text*, and to deliver the *Old Testament* safely and intirely over to us.) What a useful and most laborious enterprize this *Massora* was, we may know by the description *Buxtorffe* gives of it in the second Chapter of his most excellent *Commentarius Massorethicus*. Massora (sayes he) *est Doctrina critica a priscis* Hebræorum *sapientibus circa Textum* Hebræum *Sacræ Scripturæ ingeniosè inventa, quâ Versus, Voces, & Literæ ejus numeratæ, omnisq; ipsarum varietas notata, & suis locis cum singulorum versuum recitatione indicata est, ut sic constans & genuina ejus lectio conservetur, & ab omni mutatione aut corruptione æternum preservetur, & validè premuniatur.* The *Massora is a critical Learning about the* Hebrew *Text of the Sacred Scripture, ingeniosly invented by the Ancient Wise men amongst the Jews, in which the Verses, Words and Letters, are all numbred, and all their variations particularly noted, and set down in their proper places, with a recital of the particular Verses, that so the constant and genuine reading of the Scripture may be preserved, and for ever secured against all change or corruption.* And that *Ezra* and this great *Synagogue* were most probably the first Authors and Contrivers of the *Massora* (however augmented by others in after Ages) and not some learned

learned *Jews* at *Tiberias* that long lived after our Saviour, as some have supposed. *Buxtorffe* in the *Eleventh Chap.* of the same Book hath largely and learnedly proved, from the best and most Ancient Writers amongst the *Jews*, and thus concludes upon the whole. *Hæc communis est* Hebræorum *sententia*, Massoram *a viris Synagogæ magnæ profectam esse. This is the common opinion amongst the* Jews, *that the* Massora *came from the men of the great Synagogue.*

Thirdly, That *Ezra* and that great *Synagogue*, to render the sacred Text more intelligible, and make the truth of some Historical Relations more evident, did make some small *additions*, and some verbal *alterations* in some places, is greatly probable, and it might easily be done; but no *Re-penning* the *Bible*, nor the least violation offered to the sacred *Record*, nor to the *credit* of its *Authority*: nor can the least Objection (though many have indeavoured it) be raised from hence to that purpose, when so *many Persons of an infallible Spirit were present in that Assembly*, and who were, without doubt *Divinely directed* about what they did in that matter. In a Word, that famous and venerable *Senate* in which the last of the *Prophets* were present, all parts of the *Old Testament* being compleated, and the whole *Prophecy* that God vouchsafed till the coming of the *Messiah* delivered, applied

plied themſelves to the punctual Collection of the ſeveral parts together, and ſecuring the *Original text* againſt any *corruption* or *alteration*, exactly ſetled the *Canon* of the *Old Teſtament*, which the *Jews* kept punctually to, till the times of our *Saviour*, who fully *approved* the *Scriptures* as he then found the *Jews* in poſſeſſion of them.

Secondly, That any parts of the *Bible*, or any Books dictated by the *Holy Ghoſt* are wholly *Loſt*, we utterly deny. The affirmation of it is neither conſiſting with the notion of *Divine providence* in General, nor can any particular proof be brought to make it good. Thoſe who inſiſt upon this (as *Bellarmine* and ſome of the *Papiſts* do, thereby to gain an advantage to the *Church* when 'tis put in ballance with the *Bible*: And others with deſign by proving the *Loſs* of any *Part*, to invalidate the Authority of the *whole*) inſtance in the *three thouſand paralles or proverbs of Solomon, and a thouſand and five ſongs*, ſpoken of, 1 *King*. 4. 32. The *Books of Nathan the Prophet, and Gad the Seer*, mentioned in the ſecond of *Chronicles*, The *Prophecy of Abijah the Shilonite*, and the viſions of *Iddo* or *Addo the Seer*, ſpoken of in the 2 *Chron*. 9. and ſome others: And under the *New Teſtament*, an *Epiſtle of St.* Paul *written* (as they ſuppoſe)

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to the Laodicæans, mentioned *Colos.* 4. 16. Although very many of these Writings mentioned in the *Old Testament* seem to refer to *other parts of Scripture contained in the Bible*. In particular, 'tis probable that *Nathan* and *Gad* wrote some parts of the Books of *Samuel* and the *Kings*, so much at least as concerns the *Actions* of *David*, of which they were exactly knowing, if they wrote not the whole *Second Book of Samuel* and *the first of the Kings*, which some upon probable grounds suppose; yet, Admit all these were *other writings* than are now contained in any part of the *Bible*, it will no way follow they were ever any part of *Canonical Scripture*. When the Scripture mention's Books written by these or any other Men, and relates historically to the matter of them, (as St. *Paul* sometimes quoted *Heathen Authors*) Will that Infer *They are parts of the Bible*? By no means; Nay, the very Writers of the *Bible* themselves, such as *David*, *Solomon*, and others of the Prophets might (and without all doubt some of them did) Write many things in an ordinary way, that were True, without any *Divine* or *Infallible direction*, and which were never incorporated with the *Bible*; and so says St. *Austin*, in his 18th Book *De civ. Dei.* says he, *Those Prophets whom it pleased the Holy Spirit to inspire, wrote some*

some things as Men, And those works we have not in our Canon, nor had the Jews in theirs: and other things as from the mouth of God; and these works are really Distinct, Some being held their own as Men, and some the Lords as speaking by them. And therefore He that will prove from hence, that any parts of the *Bible* are *Lost*, must first be well assured that *These* are no parts of the Scriptures we are now possessed of, and Secondly that admitting they are not, That they were written by an Infallible Spirit, and once within the *Canon*: Of which Latter, we are well assured the least proof cannot be made: For the *Jews* were most faithful *Preservers* of those *Oracles of God* committed unto their charge: Nor were they ever so much as once *blamed* by *Christ* or the *Apostles* for any Miscarriage that way. As for an *Epistle* supposed to be written by St. *Paul* under the *New Testament* to the *Laodiceans*, which is since Lost; The supposition is frivolous and groundless; For the words in the *Greek* are τὴν ἐκ Λαοδικείας, *And that from Laodicea.* Which cannot be understood of an Epistle written by St. *Paul to Laodicea*, but of one written *from Laodicea* either to the *Colossians* themselves which they then had by them, or else to St. *Paul*, which he sent them, and required them to read it, as containing something ex-

expedient for them to know. The mistaken opinion from this place, of an Epistle from St. *Paul to the Laodiceans*, hath most probably arisen from the ill *rendition* in the *Vulgar Latin*, where the words are rendered, *& illa quæ est Laodicenium.* But without any ground from the *Original. Catherinus* confesseth that according to the opinion of *Chrisostome*, and *Oecumenius*, *Non hic nominari Epistolam à Paulo scriptam ad Laodicenses, sed ex eo loco scriptam. That here's no mention of any Epistle written by St. Paul to the Laodiceans, but of some Epistle written from Laodicea.* That there was anciently a *Counterfeit Epistle* that pretended to be written by St. *Paul* to the *Laodiceans*, which is since lost, is most true; But in those times wherein 'twas extant it was universally Rejected as *Spurious* and known so to be. St. *Jerome* speaks of it, but says, *Ab omnibus exploditur.* The second *Councel* of *Nice* in their sixth *Canon* say thus of it, *Inter Epistolas Pauli Apostoli quædam fertur ad Laodicenses, quam Patres nostri tanquam Alienam reprobaverunt. Tertullian* against *Marcion*, and *Theophilact*, both reject it with great contempt, and say, 'tis *Apostolico nomine plane indigna.* And *Bellarmine* himself, though he had formerly affirmed there was such an Epistle, which was certainly Lost, Yet in the first Chapter of his Book which he calls his *Recognition*, or *After-*

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view of his works, Retracts it, ſays he was *miſtaken, and that there never was any ſuch thing as ſuch an Epiſtle written by St.* Paul.

So that all the Inſinuations of this kind, that any parts of the *Bible*, any *Books*, written by a *Divine inſpiration* have been at any time *Loſt* out of the world, appear to be very weakly and ill Grounded. And in truth, the footſteps of *Divine providence* have been eminently viſible in Securing thoſe *Holy writings*, upon this threefold account: From *Deſtruction*, *Addition*, and *Alteration*. Firſt, No accidents of Time nor Deſigns of its worſt Enemies have Totally *obliterated* the Whole or any Part. Secondly, Though many have attempted to *piece* in, and *add* to it falſe and counterfeit Fragments, and ſome whole *Goſpels*, yet in defiance to all thoſe Eſſays, the *Scriptures* have remained *intire*, and ſtood like a Rock Impenetrable. No Spurious Writings have been able to *incorporate* with this *holy Book*. Such who have gone about to forge Scripture, have but made the Luſtre of the *Bible* more Eminent, and more evidently ſhewed us the difference of *Gods revealing from Heaven*, and *Mens counterfeiting upon Earth*: Mens writing by the ſtrength of *humane abilities*, and mens writing as they were *moved* thereunto by the *Holy Ghoſt*.

Third-

Thirdly, From *Alteration*; No man has been suffer'd (notwithstanding all the attempts of Hereticks to that purpose) to *pollute* or *corrupt* it; All such attempts have still been discovered and openly sham'd. How many *Hereticks* have carryed about their own Confutation, whilest they possessed this Book? and yet have not been suffer'd to *change* or *alter* such passages as have been most Cogent against themselves? The *Bible* passed through the *Arian-world* with all those plain Evidences it contains of the *Divinity* of our *Saviour*. When *Emperours*, *Councils*, and indeed upon the matter the whole Christian-world, were tainted with that Heresie, the *Bible* scap'd the infection, when the *alteration* of two or three plain *texts* would have done them more service then all the *volumns* they wrote in their own Defence; And, great designs were on foot that way, yet they were still disappointed, as is evident by what we find in St. *Ambrose*. The *Jews* to this day need no other *Confutation* then their own *Bibles*: *Moses* and the *Prophets* in whom they trust, are their greatest *Accusers*. All sorts of *Heresiarchs* to this day are possessed of the *Bible*, as *Uriah* was of *Davids Letters* to *Joab*, which contained his own *Ruine*: and as *Goliah* was of his sword, which served at last to cut off his own head.

Secondly,

Secondly, The ſucceſs and effect of this Book ſince its conveyance, gives in a Signal and moſt undeniable Evidence to its Divinity. If we conſider the ways and means by which it has introduced it ſelf, and upon what terms the Religion contained in it has gained that reception we find it has had amongſt Man-kind. 'Tis of admirable conſideration that a Religion directly oppoſite to the whole corrupt intereſt of humane Nature, and calling men to the higheſt Mortification and Self-denial, upon the account of an Inviſible World to come, nakedly propoſed by men, upon a worldly account always inconſiderable, without any the leaſt Earthly ſupports: A Religion perioding the *Jewiſh* Religion, and totally ſubverting all other Religions: A Religion oppoſed & diſowned to the utmoſt by the *Jews* themſelves (though it derived it ſelf wholly from them, and pretended to be the natural product of their Religion, and the true Completion of all they believed and expected) a Religion in oppoſition of which the whole World beſides were agreed, and indeed both *Jews* and *Heathens* perfectly concurred. I ſay, 'Tis of admirable conſideration that ſuch

a Religion so circumstanced against all the Religion, the Wisdom, and the Force of the World, should at first make its entrance, and be embraced by so great a part of Man-kind, and within the space of thirty years or thereabouts after its first Publication, for so it was, be spread not only throughout all parts of the *Roman Empire*, but also amongst the *Parthians* and remotest *Heathens*. To no other Cause, but its own Innate worth, and the Divine evidence from Heaven attending it, can it with any tolerable colour of reason be ascribed. The zeal men had for all other Religions in which they were Educated, sufficiently prompted them to hate, abhor, and persecute it. The Learning and the Wisdom of the whole World was employed to render it despicable, and to bring it under contempt; And all the force of the *Roman Empire* was every where violently at work for its total Suppression and Extirpation. And yet, against all these seeming invincible oppositions, did the *Bible* prevail. The power of that great Empire could not withstand the naked proposal of a simple Truth; And both *Judaism* (in the main of it, as a National Esta-

Eſtabliſhment) and *Heatheniſm* finally fell before it.

This Book and the Religion it contains, as it avows it ſelf to be ſolely from God, and comes to us with a commanding voice from Heaven, ſpeaks to us in God's own Name, and upon that ſingle account requires our obedience; And thoſe that wrote it, neither had nor pretended to have any other Authority but what was Divine and from Above; So it has introduced it ſelf by Means ſuitable thereunto. Never was there at firſt any Force uſed to compel men, nor any Arts practiſed to deceive men about this matter. No man can prove out of any Story that ever the Apoſtles or the Primitive Profeſſors of this Religion raiſed Arms to introduce or promote it; Or that any Humane Authority did countenance or aſſiſt it. The Chriſtian Religion has this to ſay for it ſelf above all others, That 'tis no debtor to the Sword either in a Civil or Military way; Neither the Sword of Juſtice, nor the Sword of War can lay any claim to it, as a Product of theirs. The greateſt part of the *Roman* World had embraced it, and were become Chriſtians before *Conſtantine* publickly owned it.

it. It ows nothing to any violent course for its Primitive Reception, nor indeed to any Humane contrivement; Neither the subtilty of *Philosophers*, nor the Eloquence of Orators assisted in this matter. It never advanced one step further in its first publication than its own Innate Excellency, & the Divine evidence attending it procured it acceptance: nor did it ever gain a Convert, but where it could approve it self by Divine Evidences, to the Reasons & Consciences of men, to be Divine: I make a peremptory demand to all *Antiscriptural men* to grant me this, as a truth not capable of any denial, That for three hundred years together the Gospel by its own Divine strength, withstood the most furious and violent Winds & Tides of all humane opposition, and by no other assistance but what was purely Divine, travelled most pars of the World over: It offered it self to mens reception upon no other terms but by an Appeal to the Judgment and Concience, and was contented to stand and fall by the Rational determination of every mans own Breast, and so prevailed. Such who embraced it had no other way of Contest but Holiness of living, and Patience in suffering: It

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both which they were very Eminent. To the first, their very Enemies the *Heathens* bore testimony; *Pliny* and others speak of the Christians harmless and holy behaviour. For the latter, Never was any Religion so begun and propagated by such indefatigable Sufferings: How few Martyrs for Religion can the Heathen World boast of! If we admit *Socrates* for one, how few Successors had he? And those few they pretend to, seem by all Circumstances to be such as had no other end but to perpetuate their own names to Posterity, by suffering for such things as they thought the World would highly magnifie. But for Christian-Religion we find innumerable sufferings of Men and Women of all Ranks, Qualities, Ages, and Conditions: In many of which we cannot suppose any thing but Conscience and hopes of a future Reward could possibly be the Motive; Being persons of such mean parts and conditions, as could no way be thought to design a Name to themselves hereafter. Nor indeed can we reasonably suppose an esteem upon Earth, and vain-glory, could be the ground upon which any of them suffer'd, when we consider they suffered for

a Religion, the very name of which was every where Odious and Detestable, and the Profession of it brought nothing but shame and contempt. It swims down to these latter Ages in whole streams of Blood that ran from its Primitive Martyrs; God pleasing to introduce the Gospel at first without any thing Humane to befriend it, that we might be for ever ascertained of its Author. Who but God himself by a Power from above (can we reasonably imagine) could have enabled a few Mean, Ignorant, and Contemptible men so to confront the whole World, and in the Evening of it, (when other Religions had so long lasted, and were so fast rooted) to erect a Religion destructive to all the rest; and to break through all the Opposition that the Religion of the *Jews* and *Heathens*, the Philosophy and Learning of all the knowing parts of the World, the Laws and force of the *Roman-Empire* in its greatest splendor and strength, could form against it? And what Doctrine but one in its own Nature Divine, and attended with the visible effects of Gods Almighty Power to own and justifie it, can we conceive, could have made the World so to bow before it?

How

How ridiculous does it appear to ſuppoſe a company of mean Impoſtors that had neither God nor Men beſides themſelves to befriend them, nor any other Foundadation but a Deſign in the higheſt manner to cheat and abuſe the World, could have effected all this; and that they ſhould finally ſo prevail, and impoſe the groſſeſt Deluſion imaginable upon Mankind, againſt all ſuch Oppoſition! Had I no other conſideration to induce me to believe the *Bible* but what ariſeth from hence, this one ſeems ſingly ſufficient to me to juſtifie its Divinity, againſt all reaſonable ſuſpition of Impoſture, and for ever to ſilence all the doubts that can be at any time made about it. What greater aſſurance can we have that a Doctrine is Divine, and comes from above, then when we ſee it has ventured it ſelf upon its own Divine Evidence, againſt all Humane Oppoſition, and ſingly by that prevailed and ſpread it ſelf all the World over: Neither Arms nor Councils, neither the Policy of *Julian*, nor the Sword of *Dioclesian* could put a ſtop to its progreſs. Had God diſowned the Goſpel at firſt; Nay, had he not Eminently and Viſibly witneſſed to it from Heaven, we can-

not possibly imagine how it could have taken one step forward; It had doubtless, as it was then circumstanced, been stifled in its first birth, and buried in perpetual silence. We find all the Religion of the *Heathens* has still grown up under the shadow of Humane Power and Authority, and has still decayed when Humane props have been removed. I challenge any man to shew me any other Religion that ever prevailed in the World without Humane help! and that ever stood out the brunt of Persecution! All other Religions but what have been founded upon the *Bible* have still fallen before the Power of the Sword; 'Tis only the Religion of the *Jews* and the *Christians* (founded at first upon the *Bible*, and the Miracles wrought to confirm the Doctrine contain'd in it) that has weather'd out all attempts for its eradication. 'Tis a marvelous evidence of that solemn and divine foundation upon which the *Jewish* Church and the *Old Testament* were at first established, That notwithstanding all that the *Jews* have suffered, and their very Being in a National way, and their National Worship (in which their Religion chiefly consisted) be utterly extinguished, yet still they

they retain their Profeſſion, ſubmit to a Yoke of moſt burdenſome Ceremonies, & remain diſperſed in the World, a Monument of *Scripture-verity*, and ſo many ſtanding Witneſſes to the Truth of many eminent Predictions both in the *Old* and *New Teſtament*. And thus, from the ſucceſs of this Book alſo ſince its firſt conveyance, and all the circumſtances that have attended the progreſs of it, ſince its firſt publication, have we as great an aſſurance as in ſuch a Caſe we can well expect, that God himſelf, and no other, is in truth the Author of it.

I come, in the fourth and laſt place, to conſider this Book in it ſelf, in the Matter of it, as at the preſent we find it, and as it now lies before us. In the doing of which, I mean not to inſiſt ſeparately and abſtractedly upon any Internal evidence that reſults from the matter of the Scripture it ſelf, but to take it (as it ought to be) in Conjunction with the former, and all other Collateral proof. 'Tis neither Reaſonable nor Warrantable to disjoyn the proof God has afforded us of his Word, and lay the weight of its Juſtification upon any one ſingle Evidence;

Evidence; For, when God commands us to believe and obey this Book as his Word, and imposeth the highest penalty upon our not doing it, he layes not the stress of his Command, or the Penalty (nor ought we) upon any one particular sort of Evidence, External or Internal, but upon the whole intire proof he has made to us of it, and all those means he has afforded for our Conviction and Satisfaction about it. When we are upon a general proof of the *Bible*, 'tis not necessary to insist upon any Internal Evidence that results from the *Bible* it self, as singly sufficient to prove it, or enter into any debate whether it really be so or no, because we have all the Cumulative advantage of an External justification. And if all together be sufficient to prove the *Bible* to be what we that profess the Christian Religon take it to be, 'tis enough for our purpose.

And that the matter of the *Bible* it self, with what ever Evidence will arise from thence, is not to be abstractedly insisted on from other Collateral proof, nor that any Collateral proof will prevail in this Case without there be also an Innate Evidence resulting from the matter of the

Bible

Bible it ſelf, ſo that a Conjunction of the Evidence in both kinds, is abſolutely neceſſary to eſtabliſh a general proof, will be thus made to appear: The *Bible*, as hath been ſaid, conſiſts of three parts, *Doctrinal*, *Prophetical*, and *Hiſtorical*; whatever Evidence we have from the Scripture it ſelf to prove its own Divinity, muſt needs chiefly ariſe from the *Doctrinal* part; Becauſe the Prophetical and Hiſtorical part can never be fully juſtified without Forraign proof; we cannot know the Hiſtory of the *Bible* to be certainly true from the Bible it ſelf: Nor can we ſufficiently prove any Propheſies in any part of the *Bible* to have been actually fullfilled, becauſe they are ſaid in other places of that Book ſo to be: For 'twere to beg the Queſtion, and admit the Book to be true, when we are debating whether it be ſo or no! This we may urge in proof of the Hiſtorical and Prophetical part, from that Divine Evidence that comes from the Doctrinal, that we find ſuch Hiſtory, and ſuch Propheſie in an admirable Conjunction with ſuch a Doctrine, ſubſervient to it, tending to the eſtabliſhment of it, and inviron'd with all probable Circumſtances of being true, both from the nature

nature of the Prophesies, and also from the excellent Manner of their fulfilling, and from the rare Method of the History, in order to the great end of the whole. But at last, the Positive and absolute Proof to one that denies it, must needs depend upon somewhat Collateral to the Book it self. *Secondly*, No External proof of the *Bible* would be sufficient to any reasonable enquiry, were there not likewise an Internal Evidence resulting from it to its Divinity; that is, 'Twere to no purpose to urge any Arguments from External Evidences (be they Miracles or what they will) to prove a Book to be Divine, and sent us from God, did not the Book approve it self to the judgment of right Reason likely so to be: 'Twere a vain attempt to endeavour to make a reasonable man, upon any collateral considerations, submit to the *Bible* as a Law Divine, did not the *Bible*, upon a due Search into the matter of it, appear worthy of such a Denomination. I much applaud that saying of Mr. *Chillingworth* upon this occasion, *For my part* (sayes he) *I profess, if the Doctrine of the Scripture did not appear as good, and as fit to come from God the Fountain of goodness, as*

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the Miracles by which it was confirmed were great, I ſhould want one main Pillar of my Faith, and for want of it, I fear I ſhould be much ſtagger'd. Nay, 'tis that Innate and ſatisfactory Teſtimony the Scriptures give at laſt of themſelves, and their own Divinity to our Reaſons, that finally determins all rational aſſent, eſtabliſhes the truth of all other Teſtimonies, and upon which our belief of them as Sacred and Divine, is ultimately founded and eſtabliſhed. So that as, on the one hand, we ought not to inſiſt upon any Internal Evidence, as ſimply ſufficient to Evidence the truth of the Scriptures excluſively, to the External juſtification God has incircled them withal, and upon which the full and abſolute proof of divers parts muſt neceſſarily depend; and alſo becauſe 'tis upon all the reaſon God has given us to believe the *Bible*, that he requires our aſſent to it: So, on the other hand, we muſt not deny an Internal evidence to reſult from the Innate worth of the *Bible* it ſelf, whereby it appears to our reaſons at laſt to be what other External Arguments perſwade us to believe it is. When we taſt the Excellency of the Doctrine, and when we perceive how all the matters

matters of Fact stand justified to us, a Divinity appears in the Whole. We finde this Book to be a rare Composure of Divine Wisdom, are convinced upon the whole matter 'tis from above, and bow to the Authority of God (as the formal Reason of our Obedience) whom we evidently perceive speaking to us in it.

This being premised, I proceed to consider this Book in it self, in the Matter of it, as it now lies before us; And herein I shall endeavour these two things: First, To shew that this Book, so far as 'tis capable of being compleatly judged of, by what ariseth from it self, without any Collateral Supplement, so far as every Man's Reason becomes a competent Judge of it in its bare proposal, appears to a reasonable enquiery, most likely to come from God, and to be Divine; And by that internal Evidence arising from its own excellent Nature, reflects back also a justification to all those External Arguments brought to prove it. Secondly, That in all such things as relate to Matters of Fact, and wherein an External Justification is necessary to ascertain us fully about it, we find this Book so witnessed

witneſſed unto, ſo inviron'd with a concurrence of Humane Teſtimonies, as leaves no room for any reaſonable Doubts to be made about this Matter.

For the firſt. That this Book, ſo far as we can competently judge of it from it ſelf, appears to be Divine, and that there are many Internal Reaſons of great force, reſulting from the Matter of this Book it ſelf, to perſwade us that it is from God, and written by his ſpecial Command, will be ſufficiently manifeſt in the conſideration of theſe following Particulars. Firſt, We find contained in this Book ſome things that exceed the bounds of all Natural Abilities ever to have found out: Such as could not, in the judgment of right Reaſon, be the product of any Humane Invention. Not only ſuch things as no man did think of before, (for that every Book contains that gives birth to a New Notion) but ſuch things as no man could ever have thought of: Such as could not have been known amongſt Man-kind any other way than by *Revelation:* And therefore, though written by Men, muſt needs be revealed from Above. The Inſtances of this ſhall be theſe two; Firſt, This Book tells us ſuch things of God,

of

of his Nature, of his Eternal Counsels, of the manner of his Existence, as were utterly beyond the confines of all Natural Discovery, and could not be minted in any Humane Brain. No *finite Intellect* could ever have travelled into such Depths and Heights as by this Book we are acquainted with, and appear to us to be in the Counsels of God, in order to the glorifying of himself by the Works that he has made. No man could ever have imagined a *Trinity* in the *Deity*, or such an existence of one Simple Essence as this Book acquaints us withall: These are such things as could never be hammer'd out in any Humane Shop: Such as without Revelation could never have enter'd into any created Mind to conceive of. Secondly, That contrivement we find in this Book of Saving the World, and rebuilding the fallen Tabernacle of Humane Nature, is evidently a reproach to the best abilities of Man-kind, and an undenyable instance of this kind; 'Tis not onely what was unthought of before, but what lay infinitely distant and wide from what could be thought, either by Angels or Men, and directly fathers it self upon that *Supream Wisdom* that is

Above.

Above. And that first in respect of the thing in it self considered; And secondly, In respect of the Manner and Method of its Accomplishment. First, In respect of the Thing it self; and that on two accounts, The height of *stupendiousness* that is in it, and the transcendent degree of *excellency* that is in it. First, The *Stupendiousness* of it; What a hidden and amazing Mystery, how far removed from any mortal view or imagination, was this, That the Second Person in the Blessed Trinity should descend from Heaven, and assume Humane Nature into a conjunction with the Divine! and in that conjunction become the Saviour of the World! That He should take upon Himself, in His own Person, the Sin and Guilt of Man-kind! Die for the World! Make thereby a Satisfaction proportionate to Infinite Justice! and prepare a way for God to express himself in the utmost act of Mercy, in a conjunction with the highest exercise of Justice! No less than an Infinite Understanding could have shaped such a Design, or been the Author of such a Projection: Nor could any but God himself (with whom all things are possible, that are in themselves possible) have

found out an expedient to have reconciled those two Infinite Attributes in his dealings with an Apostate Creature. Secondly, Such a strange prodigious Excellency appears in the whole business of our Redemption, such a floodgate of Divine and Supernatural Truth is let open by it, that not only the wisest Men, but the Angels themselves look with the highest admiration upon it. Indeed, all the Ends of God and Men are so attained by it, and in a way so sutable to the Nature of Both, that nothing but the Boundless Wisdom of God could have contrived it. In what a stupendious and unthought-of way is God, in all his Attributes Manifested, Exalted, and Glorified? After how excellent a manner is the Evil of the World, both in respect of the Guilt and Dominion of it obliterated and expunged? To how astonishing a degree is the whole Interest of Man-kind provided for? And to how great a Happiness here and hereafter is the World recovered? And this in a Way, and by Means far out of the reach of the wisest Thoughts, by the Faith and Obedience of the Gospel. In which there are three things of singular remark. First, That a Man is brought thereby to as

as near a converſe with God, in the trueſt exerciſe of his Rational Faculties as our Nature will bear, and as can be had in this World, conſidering that infinite diſtance there is between the Nature of God and our preſent compoſure. Secondly, The greateſt preſent, and future *happineſs* is propoſed to Man-kind upon ſuch qualified Terms, and with ſuch regard to the Impotency of Humane Nature, as is admirable to conſider. 'Tis not made ultimately to depend upon Perfection of Action, but Sincerity of Intention. Thirdly, Proviſion is made for the greateſt and nobleſt Homage that Man-kind can pay unto God; Man is brought to do the Moſt he can, in a way moſt ſutable to his Being, as a Free and Rational Agent, and yet to the higheſt *Self-reſignation*, and God has the Glory of all his Actings. Never ſuch Sanctity and Conformity to the Divine Nature; Never ſuch willing and choſen Obedience, Never ſuch inward integrity and love to God, nor ſuch ſelf-denyal for God, as the Goſpel produceth: And yet men ſtill depending upon Divine Aſſiſtance for all this. The glory of the Whole redounds to God: His goodneſs alone is magnified; Man is ſo debaſed,

and God ſo exalted: Man becomes ſo Happy in that Debaſement, and God ſo Glorious; and both in a way ſo ſuitable to the Creator of all things, and a Creature: Indeed, the Righteouſneſs of Man is introduced in ſuch a Subordination to the Righteouſneſs of God, as fills us with the higheſt Admiration, and could never have been the effect of any Human Projection.

The manner alſo by which the Scriptures have introduced the full and perfect diſcovery of Chriſt from the beginning, is ſuch, the deſign of it appears ſo to be laid, as evidently points us to God. The whole Scriptures, even the difficulteſt parts of them, ſeem in a wonderful way to iſſue and unravel themſelves into Chriſt as their great and common *End*. If we diſſect the *Bible*, and rip up the Entrails of both *Teſtaments*, after how excellent a manner does *Chriſt* appear to be the great *Soul* of the Whole! And how ſtrange and prodigious a *vein* of Divine Wiſdom do we perceive running throughout all the Parts relating to *Him*! What a curious piece of *Divine Skill* to any conſidering Mind, is the *Scripture-Method* of *revealing* our *Saviour*! In what peculiar,

peculiar, unthought-of, yet ſtrangely proper and agreeable Expreſſions, is he promiſed! In what deeply *Myſterious*, yet fully *ſignificant* Types and Shadows repreſented! What a *dark* and *obſcure*, yet *lively* and *compleat* Image was drawn of him under the Law! With what un-imaginable variety of Predictions and Propheſies was he foretold! And with what a ſtrange concurrence of all parts of the Old Teſtament, was Chriſt brought forth in the New! The New Teſtament is ſuch a Counterpart of the Old, and the Old ſuch a Juſtification of the New, and between both there appears ſuch a harmony, reſulting from ſuch a ſtrange variety about this Matter, as none but God himſelf could ever have tun'd them into. And indeed, the whole of this buſineſs, both for Matter and Manner, appears an eminent effect of *divine Wiſdom* and cannot be aſcribed to any other cauſe.

Secondly, We find the Laws contained in this Book to be of ſuch a nature that they reach the Inſide as well as the Outſide of all Man-kind: Pierce into the Secrets of every Man's own Breaſt, govern a Man's moſt retired Thoughts, ſpeak with abſolute Authority to the *Grounds*

and *Principles*, the *Design* and *Tendency* of all mens Actions; And this seems much to evidence their Divinity. Who but God himself can exercise a Dominion over the *Mind*, speak to the *Heart*, and judge of the first and invisible risings of disobedience there? Two things upon this account are very considerable from what we find in this Book. First, That 'tis throughout equally directed to the mind, and to the thoughts of men, as well as their outward Actings: Forbids inward *coveting* and *lusting*, upon the same penalty that it does the grossest Practice of evil. This, as 'twas never done in any Heathen Laws, so 'twere absurd for any Humane Authority to attempt it: because things of that nature are onely connizable by an Infinite Knowledge. Secondly, This Book does not only pretend to an invisible dominion in that kind, But it makes such a discovery to us of the inside of the World, speaks so exactly to what we find within our selves, does so effectually command us, has such a justification from every man's own Breast, that we cannot but reasonably suppose that God himself was the Author of it. Who but He that perfectly knows what is in Man,

Man, could have encompaſſed him round with ſuch a Law? A Law that divides between the Soul and the Spirit, and is a diſcerner of the Thoughts of the Heart. Who, but He, could have given ſuch an exact Rule to the manifold Thoughts and Inventions of Men? There's not a private Cloſet in any Man's Soul, into which the force of this Law does not, ſome way or other, extend it ſelf. There's not a Mental Caſe can happen that's left undetermined, but falls under ſome Regulation or other from this Book. In ſhort, Here's a Book that tells us the Good and Evil of all our Thoughts, becomes a perfect Law to our Inward parts, punctually ſpeaks to all that's in our Hearts; Nay, tells us more than we before knew of our ſelves, and yet find to be true. Is not this likely to be the Voice of God? None but he that made us, that ſees within us, and from a Supream Soveraignty over us, judges upon the Whole that belongs to us, can we reaſonably imagine, could have promulg'd ſuch a Law?

Thirdly, The deſign and tendency of this Book, and the influence it hath upon Humane Life, does greatly perſwade us that 'tis from God, and can have no other

Author. The evident tendency of it, is to bring us to the best way of Living we are capable of in this World, both in respect of God, of our selves, and all others. The Doctrines and Precepts of this Holy Book are so justified to us from the Light of our own Reason, and do so directly tend to the perfection of our Nature, and so guide us to what we our selves judge to be best, that 'twere extream unreasonable to judge it an Effect of the vilest and worst sort of Imposture! Never any Doctrine taught men to live so dutifully to God, so comfortably to themselves, and so usefully one to another, so tuneably in all Holiness and Righteousness, as this of the *Bible* does. The Doctrines of this Book are most transparent Beams of Divine Perfection: They are a Rule given according to what is eternally existing in the Holy Nature of God, so far as we are capable of a conformity to it: And that, in the judgement of right Reason, is the Highest and Noblest account of all good Living; For, we cannot do better than in our Measure to correspond to Divine Perfection. No Law can, with greater Reason, and less Arbitrariness, nor more indispensably oblige us,

us, than that which appears to be grounded upon the Eternal and Unchangeable Nature of God; And such are the Laws of the Gospel, The great Design of which is to assimilate men, (so far as their Faculties will bear it) to the excellent Nature of God, and that rational *Idea* of it we are all born withal. What crooked and imperfect Lines have men drawn in their best Documents both Moral and Divine, compared with this compleat and excellent Rule of Holy Living! What Pure and Spiritual Worship is here! How suitable to the Holy Nature of God! What undefiled Religion, without the least mixture of Idolatry or Superstition! What Superlative Piety and Vertue, without any one spot of Vice! Yea, forbidding Evil in the very Thoughts! What punctual and perpetual Truth and Honesty is here required, upon no other grounds but pleasing God, doing good to Others, and hopes of a Reward hereafter! There's not the least taint upon any one Duty the Scripture requires from us, by proposing any base, mean, or sordid Ends. No vain Glory: No esteem from Men: No corrupt Advantages are made the ultimate End of our Obedience. The best way of

of living, and upon the noblest account, is here propoſed to us. An exact *Scripture-Life* has as much of Heaven as can well deſcend upon Earth; Makes the World as quiet an Habitation as it can be, and Man-kind as happy in themſelves, and as eaſie one to another in all Converſe and Society as they themſelves can wiſh to be. Where is there a Man (not degenerated below his own Reaſon) but approves the Scripture-Precepts as Excellent, and juſtifies Him in his own Breaſt, that conforms moſt to them? No well-diſciplin'd *Heathen* can refuſe ſo to do. What Charity is here required! Still we are bid to hope the beſt, To look upon all Men with a kind eye, and to interpret them into the beſt ſenſe they are capable of. What commands, Not to offend weak Ones! What mutual Forgiveneſſes! What provocations to Love! What ſtrict injunctions to do good to all men upon all occaſions! With what patience and meekneſs are we taught to behave our ſelves! Indeed, 'tis ſuch a Doctrine as makes a Man perfect, throughly furniſhed to every good Work; Brings men to the beſt way of Living, the nobleſt Principles of Suffering, and the comfortableſt

tableſt way of Dying. Now, How can we better judge of a Law that pretends to come from God, and to be of Divine Miſſion, than by its Nature, the great Tendency of it, and the influence it has upon Humane Life? And when we find ſo holy and excellent a Deſign as appears throughout this whole Book, for the honouring of God, and compleating the Happineſs of Men, and in a way ſo correſponding to the judgement of right Reaſon, and that Divinity we are Born with; What can we otherwiſe judge, but that ſuch a Book muſt needs be from God? Such pure and untainted Streams of Piety and Vertue muſt needs flow from the Fountain of all Perfection. 'Tis not poſſible to imagine that the *Devil* or any *Ill* Men ſhould be ever either able or willing to compoſe a Book of ſuch a Nature, that ſhould reduce the World to ſuch a poſture as This does: To make men the beſt Subjects to God, the beſt Friends to themſelves, and the moſt uſeful Citizens one to another. Nothing leſs than an Infinite Wiſdom could have contrived ſo great a Happineſs for the World; And nothing leſs than Infinite Goodneſs it ſelf can be reaſonably thought to be the Diſpenſer

spenser of it. 'Tis extreamly absurd to think that That Doctrine, which, in the judgment of the best Reason, is the most Pure and Excellent, and most useful to the World, of any we find in it, should be the product of the Devil, or the worst sort of Impostors, (and that it must be, if it be not from God; for there's no middle way). 'Tis to suppose that such should out-do Divine-Goodness in that wherein my Reason bids me expect the highest expression of it: And in truth, That the World should stand more indebted to such Benefactors for the best things, than to God himself.

Fourthly, We find in this Book, a full and most comprehensive account of the Revolution of this whole World in all its changeable Vicissitudes, and of God's visible Providence in the disposal of all Humane Affairs. Indeed, We find this Book a compleat Map of the whole Affair of the World, and God's Government of it. There evidently appears an exact Conformity between the course of the World, and what we are here told of it. Nothing comes at any time to pass contradictive of, but according to, what is here revealed to us; And this we shall find,

find, if we consider the course of things, either in a *Natural* way, a *Moral* way, or a *Spiritual* way: First, In a *Natural* way; The natural course of the World has continued to this time, according to what *Moses* at first, as from the Mouth of God, declared about it: That there should be *Seed-time* and *Harvest*, *cold* and *heat*, *Summer* and *Winter*, and that *Day* and *Night* should not cease, but succeed each other. Secondly, In a *Moral* way; The Scripture has given us a Summary, yet satisfactory and full account of what-ever we have seen acted amongst Man-kind to this day, and told us in general of all those *Principles*, *Designs*, and *Practices* by which the Wheel of this World has been turn'd about by the restless minds of Men in all Ages; So that we see nothing under the Sun of which we are not some way inform'd in this Book. Thirdly, In a *Spiritually* way; Here we have an exact account of all that Divine Intercourse which has been, or at any time is, between God and Men; The manner of it set down, and the general method of God's proceedings in his *convincing*, *enlightning*, *sanctifying*, *satisfying*, and *comforting* the minds of men. No man can well judge this

this an effect of any Humane Design, nor can reasonably think that the private observation or experience of any particular men could have reached so far. Providential Occurrences would soon have confuted any counterfeit pretence to such an universal account of the whole Affair of the World: Nor could any but God himself be secure, not to mistake in such a matter. The more we contemplate this World in its various motions, the more we consider the many intricacies and changes of it, the more is the *Bible* still justified to us; because we perceive the whole transaction of this World to be there strangely Epitomized. We are not only told in the general what shall fall out, that bad men shall often Prosper, and good men Suffer; that there is one event to the Righteous and the Wicked; that no man shall be able to make a certain judgment of Gods Loving or Hating, by the course of things here below; but we are so far pointed to the Reasons and Ends of these things, as much justifies Providence to us, and greatly informs us about those Grounds upon which God proceeds in his Supream Rule here, in order to his future judgment hereafter.

No-

Nothing can befall a good man, or an ill man, or happen in any kind, of which we are not told in the Bible, and of the reaſon whereof we have not ſome general and ſatisfying account. 'Tis extreamly unreaſonable to think that any other but God himſelf (eſpecially, not the worſt deceivers) could have made ſuch a compleat Model of his own Government; and 'tis no little juſtification of this Book, that God viſibly governs the World according to what is here delivered. And thoſe Laws muſt needs have all the rational probability to be *Divine*, and come from the Supream Ruler above, ſutably to which all things evidently come about here below, and to which the whole Revolution of this World, in all times and ages, and in all reſpects, appears exactly correſponding.

Fifthly, We find in this Book a full and ample proviſion for all the ills that have accompanied mans firſt Apoſtacy, and adequate and proper Cures for all the Maladies of humane life. And therefore 'tis very likely to be a *Divine preſcription* ſent from above, to heal and relieve the World. Who but God himſelf can be reaſonably ſuppoſed ſafely to diſ-

engage

engage Man-kind from all the entanglements of their Lapsed and Apostate condition? I appeal to every unprejudiced man whether this Book be not a general Store-house, a *Divine Treasury*, (far beyond what the World besides can afford) to supply all the wants of Humane Nature: Not only more clearly and fully than was ever before, revealing to us the greatest good, pointing us to that true *Summum bonum* of a rational Being which Mankind in all Ages, with so much ignorance and disagreement with themselves, had been groping after, and conducting us to the greatest happiness, but applying suitable Remedies to every Distemper. Where can any man under the sense of sin, and the displeasure of God, or under any other dejection of mind, poverty or disgrace in the World, sickness of body, loss of friends, or any sort of affliction, comfort himself as he may here? What a *Sacrifice* are we here told of for *Sin*! We find all men in all Religions have still harped upon a *Sacrifice*; The Sacrifices of living men were most Inhumane, detested by the best of *Heathens*; The sacrificing of Beasts, though generally practis'd, the wisest knew

knew not what to make of, and thought it strange that God should be Atoned by the fat of a Brute. How infinitely does the Sacrifice we are acquainted withal by the Gospel, exceed all the World has thought of in that kind! Of how amazing, and yet of how satisfying a nature is it! What Divine Antidotes are there provided in this Book, from suitable Examples, comforting Promises, wise Directions, heavenly Counsels, to keep up a sinking Mind! 'Tis like that Wood where *Jonathan* came in his extremity and found Honey every where dropping, and a taste of it revived his Spirits, and renewed his Vigour. And herein lies the strength of this Consideration, The reality, the excellent and proper nature of that relief, and those Satisfactions that upon al occasions are here proposed to us: They are no such deluding Trifles as men are cheated into by education, and acquiesce in only because they are bred up with a good Opinion of this Book: But they are such things as are of intrinsick value, such as are in themselves, and in their own Nature most real & most suitable to a rational Being in all such cases, and justified to us from the Light of our own

Reason, and that innate Notion we have of a *Deity*. The Voice of the Bible is, *If thou do well* (they own Conscience being judge) *thou shalt be accepted: If not, Sin lies at the door*. We find no resemblance here of the Heathen Superstitions, nor of those Vanities wherewith other Religions, through mens ignorance, and the track of Education, have besotted the World. The terms of our Reconciliation with God, and our happiness in this World and the next, are such, and so propounded to us, as every mans own reason must needs acquiesce in; and there is a self-evident satisfaction results from the performance of them. It prevails much upon me, this general provision I find here made to suite all mens conditions in all Times and Ages, and the great worth and transcendent excellency of it. And 'tis a great account to us of that wonderful variety we find in this Book, both for matter and expression; What Depths and Shallows in both respects! Sometimes the sublimest Notions clothed with the highest Expressions; Sometimes the easiest plainest Truths imaginable; Sometimes Divinity deck't with the richest Expressions of Oratory, to delight and instruct the

the nobleſt and largeſt mind: Sometimes brought down to the meaneſt Similitudes, and expreſſed by things of the moſt common uſe amongſt Man-kind, to be graſped by the pooreſt underſtanding: And yet a decency and majeſty in all. No part of Man-kind but find here a plentiful and ſuitable proviſion for every Condition. Not an impotent impoveriſhed mind but is here relieved, nor a condition ſo mean but is cared for. And this tells us much of the vanity of thoſe who are apt to ſit in judgment upon this Holy Book; To find fault with ſome things as too Myſterious, and with others as too mean: To think many Stories, Examples, Directions, Superfluous, and others wholly Impertinent. When ſuch men can fathom the deep and large deſign of this Book, are able fully to comprehend the ſizes of all mens Capacities, and the variety of all mens Conditions, and can aſſure me that what one contemns, or not underſtands, may not prove of excellent and proper uſe to another, I then will acknowledge, They are every way fit to correct the Bible, and leave them free to fit the World with a better Model.

Sixthly, This Book appears ſo compo-

ed, that all Truths are visibly concenter'd in it. Here is indeed a perfect Rendesvouz of all such Truths as were any where scattered, and the World imperfectly has had, and all such as they were in need to have; All such natural Truths, both of a Moral and Divine Nature, as the Reason of the World does acknowledge, and a full discovery of all such supernatural Truths as the minds of men naturally pursue, and are inquisitive after. Whatever is written in mans heart, or upon the Works that God has made, is here, after an excellent manner Transcribed, Justified, and Improved: And many defects of natural Knowledge supernaturally supplyed, by a most suitable Revelation. So that if we'l judge of this Book, either by what we certainly do know, or by what we need and desire to know, and expect should be revealed to us, concerning God, our selves, and this whole World; We shall find great reason to derive this Book from Above, and subscribe to it as Divine. For the First; Never any Book contained such a System of natural Truth since the World began, nor ever so far interpreted to us what truly is so; And of this, every mans own

Reason

Reaſon becomes a proper and competent Judge. Secondly, Never any Book has told us ſo much, nor gone ſo far to fix the reſtleſs minds of men about all ſuch *ſupernatural* things as they are moſt inquiſitive after. 'Tis here we have a certain account of God's Nature, and the manner of his Exiſtence; how and when he created the World! With what Deſigns, and to what Ends he diſpoſes and governs it! Whence all our diſorder firſt came! How 'tis to be cured! Sin removed! and Man reconciled to God! 'Tis here we are certainly aſſured of the Reſurrection of our Bodies, the Immortality of our Souls, and the condition of our future being for ever. 'Tis here, we know all we can know, and all we need to know, both of this World and the next. From no other but God himſelf could ſuch a Beam of Light have broke forth, ſo to enlighten the World; Nor will it ſeem any way tolerable to an unprejudiced Judgment to father ſuch a Book upon the higheſt principle of Falſhood, and derive it from the worſt deſign that ever the World was defiled with.

Secondly, I ſhall endeavour to ſhew, that this Book (ſo far as it relates to matters of Fact, wherein an External

justification is necessary) is so far witnessed unto, that there can be no room left for any reasonable doubt to be made about it. First, That there was such a man as *Moses*, and such a People as the *Jews* in *Egypt*, in those times which the Scripture mentions: That *Moses* was their Leader, and that he led them out of *Egypt*, wrote their Story, and gave Laws to them, we have attested to us by the most Ancient Records of the *Egyptians*, the *Phenicians*, the *Caldeans*, and the *Grecians*: By *Sanchoniathon* the famous *Phenician* Antiquary, *Berosus* a *Caldean*, *Ptolomeus*, and *Manetho* Writers of the *Egyptian*-Chronicles: The latter of whom, *Manetho*, speaks very particularly both of the *Jews* coming into *Egypt*, and their departure thence: And amongst the *Grecian* Writers, by *Artapanus*, *Polemo*, *Eupolemus*, *Diodorus Siculus*, with many others (as is at large proved by *Josephus* in his first Book against *Appion*:) And one of these, *Artapanus*, is so large in his Relation of the Story of *Moses*, that he sets down much of the business of his whole life, and many of his Miracles, his contesting with the *Magicians* before the King of *Egypt*, his carrying the *Jews* thorow

thorow the Red Sea, and the drowning of the *Egyptians* who purſued them; his dwelling with the *Jews* after in the Wilderneſs, *Who were there* (ſays he) *fed with a certain Snow that God rained from Heaven:* And at laſt, deſcribes particularly the very Perſon of *Moſes*, and ſets down his Stature, his Countenance, and his Complexion. Many of the ſame things are Recorded by *Eupolemus*, *Demetrius*, and others. *Numenius* a *Pythogorean*-Philoſopher (whom we find quoted in *Origens*'s fourth Book againſt *Celſus*) tells us he had read the Life of *Moſes* in many good Hiſtories: And relates many particulars of him, as, his being taken out of the *Water*, his being bred up in the *Court*, that he wrought many *Miracles*, and that certain *Magicians*, called *Jannes* and *Jambres*, attempted to do the like. No one Story amongſt the *Heathen* of any Nation has been ſo witneſſed unto by Writers Forraign to that Nation, as the Hiſtory of the *Jews* has been, who from their *greateſt enemies* have received a ſufficient Teſtimony, in point of Fact, to the truth of *Moſes*, and what he wrote. And indeed conſidering how great and eminent a Common-wealth was at firſt

first established by the Writings of *Moses*, and what a notorious and visible continuance and succession there was of it, 'Tis Morally impossible that the business of *Moses* and his Writing in those times, in matter of Fact, should be fictitious and false. Of so much of the History written by *Moses* as relates to things transacted before the Flood, we cannot expect to find any exact and punctual account in a Traditional way: Because of the great disadvantage of Oral Tradition, especially by the confusion of *Babel*. And yet, 'tis very evident that some considerable Remainders of the Ancient Story of the first World, about the Creation, the long lives of men in those first times, and divers other things were preserved amongst the several Nations after the dispersion at *Babel*. And we find many things relating thereto in *Hermes*, *Orpheus*, *Homer*, *Hesiod*, and the most Primitive Writers: Of which *Vossius*, *Bochartus*, and many others have given a very satisfying account. Concerning the Flood, that there was such a Deluge, nothing has been more universally credited; And because the Tradition of it was, That it befel in the prime time of the

the World, and men were generally ignorant of the right account of times; Therefore they applyed it ſtill to that time they thought moſt ancient. So the *Thebans* to the times of *Ogyges*, and the *Theſſalians* to the time of *Deucalion*; which Floods of *Ogyges* and *Deucalion* were not two other diſtinct Floods, (as ſome have ſuppoſed) but the ſame Flood of *Noah*, applyed to thoſe times, and called by thoſe Names which they thought of greateſt Antiquity. One ſayes well, *What Nation has not believed it?* Even amongſt the remoteſt *Indians* we find the Tradition of it has remained: And *what Author has not ſpoken of it?* Amongſt the *Egyptians*, *Phenicians*, *Grecians*, and *Romans*, nothing more common. And well may we ſuppoſe it ſhould be ſo; For, Thoſe who attempted the rearing of that Structure at *Babel*, had probably a particular reſpect, in what they did, to the Flood that was paſt, reſolving to prevent the danger of another, (which ſprang from their own Infidelity: For God by his Promiſe to *Noah* had ſecured them againſt all fears of that kind) and therefore had ſufficient occaſion whereſoever they came, to preſerve and continue the memory of it. *Beroſus*,

rosus, one of the most antient Writers after *Moses*, (I mean the true antient *Berosus*, and not the latter Counterfeit of him) sets down the Story of it, in the very same way that *Moses* does: Begins his History, *Ante Aquarum cladem Famosam quâ universus pertit orbis*; And sayes, There was only *eight Persons saved*. *Cyril* in his first Book against *Julian*, shews that *Alexander Polyhistor* and *Abidene*, under the feigned names of *Saturn* and *Xysuthrus*, have writ for the most part the same Story that *Moses* has done, of the Flood, and of the Ark, and the Place of its Resting. And in very many other antient Authors have we particular Narratives of it. And 'tis evident that many Poetical Fictions, and Fabulous Stories, that we find amongst the Antient *Heathen Writers* had their derivations from thence. So that, to doubt about the Fact of what *Moses* has written in this particular, were extreamly unreasonable; For 'twere to deny what is eminently witnessed unto by several Historians of several Countreys, and to withstand the Stream of an Universal Tradition. The Story of Building the *Babylonian Tower* is particularly set down by the same *Alexander Polyhistor* and *Abidene*,

Abidene, as we find them quoted at large by *Eusebius*: They tell us, That Men would needs, in despite of the Godds, build up a Tower to the Sun in the place where *Babylon* now is; And when they had built it very high, the Godds overthrew it; And that at that time began the diversity of Languages. And 'tis obvious to the commonest understanding, That all that Fiction of the Poets about the *Gyants warring against Heaven*, is but a corruption of this Story. The Burning of *Sodom* is mentioned by many of the best credited Authors, by *Diodorus Siculus*, *Strabo*, *Tacitus*, *Pliny*, and *Solinus*. And 'twere easie to produce the like Testimonies to the most eminent Passages that *Moses* has set down. That the People of *Israel* conquered the Land of *Canaan*, dispossest the Inhabitants, and setled themselves in *Palestine*, is a thing so notorious from the Effects, that 'tis capable of no denyal: And we have a large account of many particulars of it in *Procopius*, *Eupolemus*, and other Authors who wrote of *Joshua*, *Samuel*, *Saul*, *David*, (in whom, according to the Prediction of *Moses*, the Government of that People came into the Tribe of *Judah*) and others mentioned in the

the *Sacred Story*. That there was such a King as *Solomon* that built a Temple at *Jerusalem*, *Josephus* in his first Book against *Appion*, proves from the antient Chronicles of the *Tyrians*, which (sayes he) they have kept with great diligence: And therein mention is made of *Solomons* League with the King of *Tyre*, and of his building the Temple at *Jerusalem*, and the exact time of it, *A hundred forty three years and eight months before the building of Carthage*. The same account we have in *Eupolemus*, *Alexander Polyhistor*, *Hecateus*, *Dius* a *Phenician*, and many others, who have written so largely about that Temple, that as some have observed, There was not a Vessel, nor any Tool, or Instrument in it, wch they have not particularly mentioned: which exactness we find not in any Heathen Story in the Descriptions of any *Temples* of their own. The Captivity of the *Jews* in *Babylon*, *Cyrus* his obtaining the *Persian Empire*, and his Conquest of *Babylon*, is all punctually set down by prophane Writers. *Alexander Polyhistor* writes an exact Story of *Jeremiah's* Prophesie, and of the Captivity. And *Diocles* and *Berosus* both give an account of the *Jews* deliverance by *Cyrus*, and that they

they were Captives in *Babylon* 70 years. And *Alexander Polybistor* and *Hecateus*, both write of *Cyrus* his re-building the Temple of *Jerusalem*. *Daniels* Predictions about the *four Monarchies* and other things, have been visibly fulfilled beyond all denyal. *Porphyry* so raged heretofore at that Prophetical Instance of the Truth of the Bible, that he seeks by all means to evade it, spends his whole twelfth book which he wrote against the Christians to that purpose, and finds no other way at last to do it, but by an absurd pretence, That those Prophesies about the *four Monarchies* were written long after *Daniels* death by some other in the times of *Antiochus*: Which is sufficiently confuted, Not only by the credible relation we have in History, that *Daniels* Prophesie was shewed by *Iaddus* the High-Priest of the *Jews* to *Alexander*, (who lived many years before *Antiochus*) when he was marching toward *Jerusalem* with an intention to destroy it, who finding himself so particularly in that Prophesie, prophesied of, spared the City thereupon: But because the 70 *Interpreters*, who translated the Old Testament for *Ptolomy*, about a hundred years before *Antiochus*, translated

ted the Book of *Daniel*, which was then extant and part of the Bible. After the Captivity, 'tis clear from all Story, that the *Jews* that returned out of *Babylon* continued under a National establishment (though not under a succession of Kingly Government from the Posterity of *David*, for God had declared by *Jeremiah*, that none of the Seed of *Jeconiah* should any more sit upon the Throne of *David*) had Sovereign Jurisdiction among them (which the *ten Tribes* had wholly lost, and long before were totally deprived of); Nay, were still govern'd by some of themselves, till the *Romans* imposed *Herod* an *Idumean* upon them, in whose time our Saviour was born; So that the *Scepter did not depart from* Judah, *nor a Law-giver from between his feet till* Shiloe *came*.

For the Matters of Fact relating to the New Testament, 'Tis not possible for any reasonable Man to dis-believe, there was such a Man in Fact as our Saviour, and such Men as the Apostles, that lived in those times, that erected the *Christian Religion*, because of the succession of it in multitudes of Professors ever since, and the written Account we have of it; Not only from Christians themselves, but from

Jews

Jews and *Heathens* in those times. *Tacitus* and *Suetonius* both make mention of Christ; *Tacitus* in the 15*th* Book of his *Annals*, speaking of *Nero*'s cruelty to the Christians, says, *The Author of them was one Christ, who in the Reign of* Tiberius *was punished with death, by* Pontius Pilate *Procurator of* Judea. *Josephus* speaks of him. *Pliny*, *Suetonius*, and others, write of the Christians extant in those times, of their Principles, their manner of Living, and of their Sufferings. *Suetonius* says, in the Life of *Nero*, *Christianos genus hominum maleficæ superstitionis suppliciis affixit*: *That he punished the Christians, a sort of men of a magical superstition.* Many Historical Passages in the Gospels are attested to us by *Heathen* and *Jewish-Writters*, (though 'tis most certain, the *Roman Historians* of that Age knew not much of the Affairs of *Palestine*, as appears by what they have writ concerning the *Jews*, especially *Tacitus*, who appears very grosly ignorant both about them and their Religion). The *Star* that appeared at our Saviours Birth is mentioned by *Pliny*, *lib. 2. chap. 5.* And by the Philosopher *Chalcidius* largely in his Comment upon *Platoes Timæus*: *Herods* killing the

the Children in *Bethlehem*, by *Macrobius*. The Eclipse of the Sun upon the Crucifixion of our Saviour (which considering the Position of the Moon at that time, it being the time of the Jews Passeover, must needs be judged to be prodigiously supernatural) was mentioned in many Heathen Writers; which *Eusebius* sayes he himself had read. Both *Eusebius* in his Chronology, and *Origen* in his second Book against *Celsus*, tell us, That *Phlegon Trallianus*, who lived in the time of *Adrian*, in the thirteenth Book of his Chronicles, wrote of this Eclipse, and sayes, *That in the fourth year of the two hundred and tenth Olympiad, there was the greatest Eclipse of the Sun that ever was beheld, and withal a strange Earth-quake.* And that year was exactly the eighteenth year of *Tiberius*, in which our Saviour suffered. And 'tis certain, by what we find in *Tertullian's Apology*, and other of the Christian Writers, in those first Ages, that this and divers other Passages that relate to the Story of the Gospel, were in those times Registred amongst the *Romans*; For, they often appeal to their own Records to prove the truth of this and many other particulars. *Justin Martyr* in his Apology

logy to the Emperor *Antoninus*, (which he wrote but fifty years after the death of St. *John*) perſwading the Emperor to the belief of our Saviours Miracles, refers him to the Acts of *Pontius Pilate* then Regiſtred at *Rome*. Ὅτι δὲ ταῦτα ἐποίησεν ὁ Χριστὸς, ἐκ τῶν ἐπὶ Ποντίου Πιλάτου γινομένων μαθεῖν δύνασθε. *That our Saviour* (ſays he) *did theſe things, you may learn from the Regiſters of the Acts done under* Pontius Pilate. *Joſephus* who was born about five or ſix years after our Saviours ſuffering, and ſurvived the Reigns of both the *Viſpatians*, relates much of the New Teſtament Story of *John* the *Baptiſt*, of his Holy Life, and alſo of his Death: Tells us of *Herod*, (and gives a large and particular account of his ſtrange and remarkable Death) of *Pilate*, of *Feſtus*, *Felix*, *Gamaliel*, and others. Indeed, neither *Jews* nor *Heathens* did ever, in thoſe times contradict or deny any matter of Fact that relates to the New Teſtament Story, judging it certain beyond all denial. *Julian* himſelf admits the Fact of Chriſt and his Miracles, and plainly acknowledges, the Books of the New Teſtament were written in thoſe Times, and by thoſe very Men whoſe names they bear. That we have no fuller

and exacter an Account of Christ, and the Affairs of *Judea*, in his time in the *Roman Story*, is not to be much wonder'd at, if we consider the peaceable Posture that Country was then in, (News which best pleased the *Romans* from any of their Provinces, and wherein they were mostly concern'd). *Tacitus* observes that *Judea* was most quiet in the Reign of *Tiberius*, (as well it might; All that our Saviour and his Followers did tending highly to Peace and Subjection). Now, We find that the *Roman-Writers* chiefly applyed themselves to write of some famous *Wars*, the suppression of some eminent *Mutinies*, or some such Accidents as in their Issue redounded much to the *Roman glory*: The peaceable condition of any Province usually shortned their Relation of it; and therefore, neither of the *Jews* nor of the *Christians* in that Age have they vouchsafed to say much. Nor did the Christians at any time (such was their peaceable and submissive behaviour) give Historians occasion to mention much more of them than their patient sufferings. But in the after-times of *Vespatian*, *Trajan*, & *Adrian*, when the *Roman Sword* was drawn against the *Jews*, and there were great Mutinies, Rebel-

Rebellions, and Wars amongſt them, the *Roman-Hiſtorians* have left us an ample Relation of all thoſe Affairs.

Two things there are of great eminency in themſelves, and of moſt publick Nature, contained in the *Bible*, the Fact of which have had ſuch ſignal juſtification, as does greatly eſtabliſh the Truth of the Whole, and to which a very peculiar Remark is due; The one is, the Hiſtory of the Flood in the Old Teſtament, and and the re-peopling of the World after it by the Poſterity of *Noah*: The other is, thoſe Prophetical Predictions of the *Deſtruction of Jeruſalem*, of the ruine of the Temple, and the Afflictions and Sufferings of the *Jews*, uttered by our Saviour in the *New*. For the firſt, That there was ſuch a Flood, Nothing (I have ſhewed) has had a more univerſal Belief. That the Earth (according to the Hiſtory of *Moſes*) was again re-peopled by the Poſterity of *Noah*, and that the Nations were divided in the Earth from his three Sons, and their Iſſue, as *Moſes* tells us, we have (from the Records of all Nations, and the conſent of all Hiſtory) abundant cauſe to believe; And that upon this three-fold account. Firſt, We

find that in those Eastern Parts where *Noah* and his Family are said first to land and settle themselves after the Deluge, the Grandure of the World first began: (of which the Greatness and Splendor of the *Assyrian-Empire* is a sufficient instance.) Those Eastern Countries arriving to much state and pomp, and to much greatness in Dominion and Government, long before either in *Greece*, *Italy*, or any of the Western Parts, any such thing was attained to or known. Which evidently shews that the Inhabitants of those Countries were the First-born and Heirs of the World, who had the great Court and Metropolis amongst them; and that other Nations were of the Younger House, and Colonies of a Latter Edition. Secondly, The earliness of Learning, of Arts, Sciences, and Inventions, amongst the *Assyrians*, *Chaldæans*, and *Egyptians*, before they so much as budded forth, or appeared in other Countries, does argue, That those parts were first inhabited. That they were the eldest Possessors of the World, had been longest in it, were of greatest Experience, and that other Nations & People were gradually derived and planted from those Countries, and

the Inhabitants of that part of the World. Thirdly, We find that those in honour of whom the Nations received their first Names, were the Posterity of *Noah* that *Moses* tells us of. From *Japhet* (most probably the Eldest Son of *Noah*) called by *Hesiod*, and others of the most antient Writers, *Japitos*, and his Posterity *Japetonides*, came the *Gomerians* or *Cymbrians* from his Son *Gomer*, the *Magogians* from *Magog*; the *Medes* or *Madians* from *Madus*; the *Jones* (after called *Greeks*) from *Javan*, in Greek *Jovan*; and so from the Posterity of the other two: The *Canaanites* from *Canaan*; the *Sabeans* from *Seba*, (which the *Grecians* write *Saba*) the *Philistims* from *Palesthim*; the *Thracians* from *Thyras*; the *Sidonians* from *Sidon*; the *Egyptians* from the Posterity of *Cham*, *Egypt* being called *Mizraim* from *Mizraim* one of his Sons; *Mizraim* in Hebrew being the name of *Egypt*, and antiently even to the time of *Josephus*, the *Egyptians* (he sayes) were called *Chuseans* from *Cush* or *Chus* the eldest Son of *Cham*: And so throughout all the chiefest parts of the Earth, we find the several Nations by their antient denominations to be originally descended from that Posterity

of *Noah* set down in the tenth of *Genesis*. *Sems* Posterity appear to have been the Planters of *Asia*, *Chams* of *Africa*, and *Japhets* of most part of *Europe*, with *Asia* the Less. Of the first peopling of *America*, from whence it was first peopled, or at what time, little account can be expected, nor can any Objection be reasonably made from thence in this Matter, because of the perfect silence in all Antient Story of any such place, and because of our total ignorance of it till of late; but there is ground sufficient to believe that 'tis of a much later Plantation than the other three parts of the World; For there are not Records found amongst the People of that Countrey that exceed a thousand years, and as most tell us from thence, Not above eight hundred. The exact and punctual account of this whole Matter, we have from *Josephus* and *Eusebius* heretofore, and from many learned men since: But especially from the most excellent *Bochart*, who has herein far exceeded them all, and whose most successful endeavours this way have not onely most evidently cleared the Truth of *Sacred History* in this particular, but indeed the Whole of what *Moses* has wrote,

is

is very greatly justified thereby.

Secondly, Those Prophetical Predictions of our Saviour in the New Testament, concerning the miseries of the *Jews*, their being led Captive into all Nations, the Besieging of *Jerusalem*, and such a Ruine of the Temple, as that *one stone should not be left upon another*, with many other Prophesies relating to that business, have had such an eminent and notorious fulfilling, in the times of *Vespatian*, *Trajan*, *Adrian*, and since, as greatly justifies the whole of the Gospel, and much assures us of the truth of all that our Saviour has spoken. What we find in *Tacitus*, *Hegysippus*, and other Heathen Writers, but especially the Story of *Josephus*, their own Historian, has written of that which happened to the *Jews*, their City and Temple, about forty years after the sufferings of Christ, is so exactly corresponding to what he himself foretold, and is set down in the 24*th* of St. *Matthew*, that no instance can be given that any future events were ever so plainly and fully foretold, and so punctually fulfilled in any Age: Nor can any impartial man consider that strange Agreement there is in every Particular between what then happened, and what

our Saviour foretold so many years before, without being greatly affected with it. And how fully competent *Josephus* was to write that Story, may be judged by what he himself sayes in his first Book against *Appion*. "I my self (*sayes he*) "have composed a most true Story of "those Wars, and of every particular "thing there done; As well I might, "having been present in all those Affairs. "For I was Captain of the *Galilæans* a-"mongst our Nation, so long as any re-"sistance could be made against the *Ro-"mans*; And then it fell out that I was "taken by the *Romans*; And being Priso-"ner unto *Titus* and *Vespatian*, they caused "me to be an eye-witness of all things "that pass't: First, In Bonds and Fet-"ters; And afterwards freed from them, "I was brought from *Alexandria* with *Ti-"tus* when he went to the Siege of *Jeru-"salem*: So that nothing could then pass "whereof I had not notice. For, be-"holding the *Roman* Army, I committed "all things to writing with all possible "diligence: My self did onely manage "all Matters disclosed unto the *Romans* "by such as yeelded themselves, for that "I only did perfectly understand them;

"Lastly,

"Lastly, Being at *Rome*, and having now "leasure, all businesses being past, I used "the help of some for the Greek Tongue, "And so I published a History of all that "had happened in the aforesaid War; "Which History of mine is so true, that "I fear not to call *Vespatian* and *Titus* "Emperors in those Wars to witness for "them; I first gave a Copy of that Book "to them, after to many noble *Romans* "present in those Wars; I sold also ma-"ny of them to our own Nation to such "as understood the Greek Language; "Amongst whom were *Julius*, *Archelaus*, "*Herod* the Honest, and the most worthy "King *Agrippa*; who do all testifie that "my History containeth nothing but "truth, who would not have been silent "if any thing, either out of Ignorance "or Flattery, I had changed or omitted "in any particular. The City of *Jerusalem* and the Temple being about forty years after our Saviours time, by *Vespatian* and *Titus* totally ruined and demolished: The *Jews* after that, three times indeavoured to rebuild their Temple; The first time was under the Emperor *Adrian*, in the year after Christ 136. Which attempt had no other effect but the slaughter

ter of fifty thousand of them, with many other sad Desolations, which we find set down at large by that noble Historian *Dion Cassius*. Their second attempt was under *Constantine*, which he soon quashed, but not without great Expressions of his Displeasure against them, cutting off their Ears, and branding their Bodies, and making most of them Slaves and Vagabonds. Their last attempt to rebuild it, was in the dayes of *Julian*, when they were so far from being any way hindered, that they were highly encouraged by *Julian* himself, with Money and all Materials, on purpose (as *Sozomon* tells us) to vilify the Christian Religion, and confront our Saviours Prediction. The Story of it we have from one that we are sure could have no design to befriend the Christians: *Ammianus Marcellinus* a Heathen-Historian, and a Souldier at that time in *Julians* Army: He tells us with what immoderate Expences, and indefatigable Industry the *Jews* by the help of *Julian* set about it, intending to make it more famous than ever: And that to expedite the Work, *Julian* appointed one *Alypius*, a Person of great quality in his Army, to oversee it, and assist in it: And at last, concludes

his

his whole Relation with these words, *Cumque rei idem fortiter instaret* Alyppius *juvaretque Provinciæ Rector, Metuendi globi flammarum prope fundamenta crebis assultibus erumpentes, fecere locum exustis aliquoties operantibus inaccessum hocque modo, elemento destinatius repellente cessavit inceptum.* Am. Marcel. lib. 23. When therefore this *Alyppius* set eagerly on the work, being assisted by the Governour of that Province, dreadful Balls of Fire bursting forth, with often assaults, near the Foundation, made the place (the Workmen being several times devoured with the flames) inaccessible: And after this manner, the Element resisting, as with some kind of destiny, the design was given over. This was that final stroke from Heaven, that put a period to all endeavours of rebuilding that place, and to all future attempts of restoring again the *Jewish Church-state* and *Polity*. And how great an Evidence is it to the truth of the Gospel, and the Whole of what our Saviour has spoken, to find all these Predictions against his great Opposers and Crucifiers so strangely and so exactly, and in so visible and notorious a manner fulfilled.

And

And in truth, that general prophetick Spirit we find throughout the *Bible*, those manifold, plain, and direct Predictions 'tis every where fill'd with, of things future and to come, tells us much of its Divinity, and greatly assures us, It could not be an effect of Imposture. Nor is it any way reasonable to think, That such who designed to Personate the *Holy Ghost* in writing a Book, should chuse to compose it in such a prophetick way, and so positively and plainly deliver themselves about so many future events: Indeed, about most of the great things that have come to pass amongst Man-kind; For, the first miscarriage in that kind, a palpable mistake in any one particular, must needs ruine the credit of the Whole. No man can believe that God can *lie*, or that an Infinite Knowledge can ever give a wrong Divination about what is to come. He therefore that personates the Holy Ghost in such a foreknowledge of things, must be sure never to miss, or else resolve to take the shame of his own Imposture. That in the Heathen-World there have been great pretentions to a fore-knowledge of things, is not to be doubted: But upon very different terms to what we

we find of that kind in the *Bible*. First, Many things pretended to therein in a prophetical way, were such as might humanely be fore-seen, and were only the regular Consequents of some natural, and then extant, though more remote and less visible Causes. The first Discoverers of many secret workings in Nature, might upon that account have soon arrived to a great prophetical Credit. *Thales* who first amongst the Heathens foresaw an Eclipse of the Sun, might easily have passed for an eminent Prophet before the knowledge of its natural cause grew common. 2dly, The Heathen Predictions were generally clothed with Expressions so enigmatical and so unintelligible, as in truth render'd them Problems rather than Prophesies. They seemed to be framed more to confound and amuse, than to inform or satisfie, and to be chiefly calculated to abuse the weaker part of the World, who are apt to adore what they least understand, and to suppose some extraordinary Matter to be wrapt up in all such clouded Expressions: According to that of *Lucretius*,

Omnia

Omnia enim stolidi magis admirantur amantque
Inversis quæ sub verbis latitantia cernunt.

Thirdly, Their oraculous Divinations of future things, were for the most part so delivered, that they had divers Aspects, carryed in them divers intricate Senses, manifold Ambiguities: And to secure their Credit, were made capable of divers (and those contrary) Interpretations: Which made the *Heathens* themselves call their great Oracle at *Delphos* λοξίας, a *Thwarter*, or *Crooked-speaker*. Fourthly, Many of their plainest and most intelligible Predictions have been consequently found to be false and mistaken; and others of them have had a direct tendency to a perfect subversion of their own Religion, and to establish the truth of the *Bible*; so 'twas when the Oracle of *Apollo* (which we find repeated by *Porphiry*) declared that, *All other Godds were but Airy Spirits, and that the God of the Hebrews was alone to be worshipped*; Which Direction, had it been followed, had put a final end to all their own Religion. So

'twas

'twas when the *Sybills* propheſied ſo fully of the coming of Chriſt, which we find repeated out of their Works, in the *4th Eglogue* of *Virgil*. We deny not but that, for ſome ſecret and to us unknown ends, God (who, as the *Heathens* generally acknowledge, could onely do it, for they ſtill aſcribed it, even *Porphiry* himſelf, unto their Godds) might and did ſometimes reveal ſome future events, which no other way could be known (as he did the death of *Saul*, and his Son, at *Endor*) to the Devil or to others, which they might commnnicate. But nothing that ever was extant in that kind, can be any way put in ballance with that Prophetick Spirit we find in the *Bible*. 'Tis much in this caſe, as 'twas in the buſineſs of Miracles; The Heathen-world were filled with Pretenſions both wayes: Some of them real and true, but moſt generally fictitious and falſe: And when true, both the Miracles and the Propheſies, from whence we derive a proof of the *Bible*, have been ſo differently circumſtanced, and there is ſuch a ſuperior eminency and luſtre in the one, as renders the other no Objection at all in this caſe. Here we have clear, plain, and poſitive predictions

ons of most of the greatest things that have happened: Predictions of such things as could have no dependance upon any natural cause, then extant when they were made: Such as must needs have their rise from the unbounded Will of God, or the free choice of men. A multitude of such Predictions, with marvalous variety, and great exactness and particularity, concerning Persons and Things, in all Ages, and throughout a constant and un-erring Success, without a Failure in a Tittle: And the accomplishment and truth of the most of them recorded in the general Story of the World. Who but God himself, can we suppose, could pronounce with such a positive certainty upon all future events? Not to foretell once, or a second time, what shall be here or there, but to speak with a positive propheticck determination about all the Great Things that were to happen, and write of the future State of the World, as men write Histories of Ages past; And to have things alwayes rightly come to pass! Never to mistake! Constantly to give right Divination! This is singly the property of God; Nor can any other be reasonably thought the Author of such a Pro-

Prophetical Book, but He that graſps all Ages with an Infinite Knowledge, ſpans all Times and Seaſons, from whom nothing can be concealed, and who with the ſame Infinite Eye, equally beholds all things *paſt*, *preſent*, and *to come*.

To conclude this Matter; If the ſuppoſition of ſome Revelation in the general be reaſonable: If it be not fit to believe that God ſhould wholly leave the World to the conduct of Nature, which hath been largely made to appear; If then we find a Book that is, of all others, the moſt Ancient, contains the moſt Primitive notions of things, and from which the earlyeſt Authors, (as from the great Fountain and Spring-head of all Divine Learning and Knowledge) appear to have drawn out much of what they have writ: That gives us the moſt punctual account of the Worlds Original: With an exact Hiſtorical Narrative of all the great Succeſſive Revolutions of it, long before any other Writers were extant, with ſuch an adjuſtment of Times all along, that without it no certain Knowledge can be attain'd in *Chronology*, and the ſtudy of it

would become more intricate than a Labyrinth: If we find a Book written by several Men, of several Qualities, Conditions, and Interests, in several distant Ages, with wonderful variety both for Matter and Manner, promoting (by an unparallel'd agreement with it self) one and the same Design, and that the most excellent in the judgment of every mans own Reason, that can descend from Heaven, or be embraced by men, terminating all in the Glory of God, and Man's utmost Happiness: A Book leading us to the farthest confines of all natural Truths our own Reasons comprehend and approve, and revealing such supernatural Truths to us, as appear evidently fitted and suited to supply all the defects of our natural Knowledge; and after an admirable manner harmonize with the rational Nature, in which things from Above are so interwoven with things below, and every way so proportioned to them, as that Truths Supernatural, which we cannot fully comprehend, appear justified to us by Truths natural, that we are perfectly judges of, and between both there appears a wonderful concord:

concord: If we find a Book written in God's own Name, commanding the World upon that single account to bow before it, and in a way peculiarly proper to his own Soveraignty and Greatness, with a positive claim to his immediate Authority; and the truth of this claim established to the World by a multitude of the greatest and most eminent Miracles, at several times, openly wrought, that ever were extant, and the Fact of which was never by any deny'd: A Book, the Doctrine whereof, by the power and reputation of those Miracles, its own innate Worth, and the Divine Assistance that accompanyed it, without the least humane help; nay against all Humane-Opposition, all earthly Policy and Force withstanding it, has gain'd so great an acceptance, as we see this to have done, subdued in its first entrance that great Empire of *Rome*, subverted the whole Judaical Fabrick, and has made both Heathenism and Judaism finally fall before it.

If we find a Book that gives us the best and most satisfying account of the whole affair of this World, and all the

Vicissitudes of it, and of God's providential Rule and Disposé of all Humane Affairs: A Book in which the whole business of the World is fully and strangely epitomized, and we see nothing happen or come to pass contradictive of, but according to what is there written, and of which we find there some general notice.

If we find a Book, the Doctrine whereof totally subverts the whole interest of the Devil, and all the corrupt interests of Men, in a way far superior to whatever was, or can rationally be supposed, ever could be attempted in that kind by the wisest and best of men, and introduces much nobler and elevated Notions of Piety and Vertue, than the World were any other way ever possessed of.

If we find a Book that has plainly and directly foretold most of the great things that have come to pass in all Ages, that has (many hundreds of years before some of them happened) pronounced with an absolute prophetick certainty about them, and has never been found to mistake in a tittle, (though it has, sometimes descended so to Particulars, as to name

name even the Persons of men long before they were born) cannot once be impeached for giving a wrong Divination about the least Circumstance relating either to Persons or Things.

If we find a Book that has been signally preserved from the greatest rage of many powerful Adversaries, and from the most Violent and Potent Attempts for its total Suppression and Ruine, of such who were in highest Authority, and furnished with greatest advantages to effect it; A Book that has scap'd all sorts of Contrivance against it, and safely descended through the Channel of so many Ages, and been to this day providentially secured and unmaimed, and intirely delivered over to us.

If we find a Book that evidently, in the judgment of all right Reason, improves Mankind to the highest pitch in all worthy and excellent Attainments, both Moral and Divine: Brings the World into the best posture 'tis capable of: Makes men Wiser, Better, and Happier than they ever were, or could themselves find out how to be.

If we find a Book that, by means utterly unthought of, and far out of all humane-reach, and yet of a most holy and excellent Nature, sweetly and safely (even to our greatest admiration) reconciles us to God: Fills up that vast Gulph that was between Heaven and Earth, and makes way for a free and perpetual intercourse between God and Man: Exposes to the view of the World thereby a Beatitude infinitely transcending whatever the Wisdom of Man could contrive or invent: which the rational Soul, the more it considers, still the more it adores and admires, and in which to the utmost 'tis delighted and satisfied.

In short, If we find a Book that has all those things (if we respect both the Matter of it, and the Manner of its conveyance to us) appurtenant to it, that we can rationally expect should accompany a Revelation from Heaven, and such a supernatural Law by which we may suppose God would enlighten and rule the World: A Book that every way answers all the great ends of Revelation, proposeth most suitable Remedies to all our natural Defects,

fects, leaves not a Diſeaſe in Humane Nature uncured, nor a Breach that mans fall hath occaſioned un-made up: If there be not one thing we can imagine God ſhould reveal to us in order to our preſent or future Welfare, about things viſible or inviſible, about This World or the Next, that we are not here told of: If we have here ſuch diſcoveries made of things ſupernatural and unſeen, as have evidently ſet bounds to the reſtleſs and inquiſitive minds of Men about thoſe Matters; And ſuch as we cannot reaſonably judge could be the product of any humane thoughts, nor of any thing leſſe than the infinite and boundleſs Wiſdom and Knowledge of GOD himſelf. If we have found ſuch a Book, If the *Bible* be thus qualified, What can be otherwiſe judged upon ſuch Premiſes, but that *this Book is indeed that ſacred Inſtrument wherein God has recorded his Sovereign Pleaſure?* This is in truth that *Revelation from Heaven* the World in all Ages have ſo much expected, and to which ſo many falſe pretenſions have in all Ages been made; Here is indeed contained that Syſtem of *Laws ſupernatural*, by the publication

whereof God has abounded in all the effects of his Bounty, and even out-done the furthest Conceptions the World has at any time had of his Goodness. How strangely unreasonable were it to derive such a Book from the highest degree of imposture! How heterodox is it to all good sense, to suppose, that the worst and most pernitious delusion by which the World has been ever abused (which we must needs reckon this Book to be, if it be not from God) should have, in point of time, the precedency of all true Religion, and be of an antienter date than any divine Truth the World can pretend to! Who, that believes the supream Existence of God, can imagine that the best documents (in the judgment of all unprejudiced reason) that ever mankind were disciplin'd by, should have the Devil, or the vilest of men for their Authors? That such should contrive and publish a Doctrine that brings men to the best method of living? That such should reduce mankind to the happyest and best condition? and out-do the Divine goodness in that particular? Who can imagine that the Devil or any ill men, in promoting the highest

higheſt *Treaſon* againſt God (counterfeting his Name and Authority) and the greateſt ruine to mankind (deluding them with falſe informations about their chiefeſt concerns) ſhould be able to produce, in their juſtification, the moſt eminent Miracles, and all the greatſt Evidences that rationally can be expected to aſcertain the World in the publication of the higheſt ſupernatural Truths? In a word, who can beleive a Book ſo circumſtanced as we find the Bible to be, ſhould be compoſed by the worſt Inſtruments, and with the worſt of deſigns? No ſuch thing can ever be credited, while we ſuppoſe there is a God ruling above, and men live in the exerciſe of Reaſon below. 'Twere moſt abſurd to ſuppoſe that any Book falſely pretending to Gods Name and Authority, deſigning his diſhonour and mans deſtruction, ſhould be capable of ſuch a proof as has been brought in defence of the Bible. And yet, ſo muſt the Tables be turn'd, the whole proof muſt ſo be inverted, of all that hath been ſaid, a contrary application muſt of neceſſity be made, if this Book comes not from God, and

and be not in truth what it self openly claims to be.

The Divine Authority of this Book we call the *Bible*, being thus, upon the forementioned grounds, established: I come, in the last place to a Consideration of such *Doubts* and *Objections* as are usually made about it. All the Material Difficulties that can be proposed, will be reduceable to these four Questions.

I.

First, How could men come to be assured, in those times wherein the several parts of the Bible were first writen, that they were written by an Infallible Spirit, and upon sure grounds, distinguish them from all other Writings?

II.

Secondly, How come we certainly to know the true Compass and Extent of *Holy Writ*? How can we know that we have now contained in our Bibles all that was writen by a Divine Inspiration, and intended as a standing Rule to the Church, and no more? That is, How

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can we be now ſafely aſſured about the Canon of the Scripture? And be able, upon good grounds, to ſay, What is *Canonical*, and what is *Not*?

III.

Thirdly, How can we that have not the *Originals* of the Scripture, not the *Autographa's* of thoſe that wrote it, but onely the Copies of them, and moſt but the *Tranſlations* of thoſe Copies, reſt aſſured we have God's Mind as it was firſt delivered?

IV.

Fourthly, How can we believe this Book (ſay ſome) to be from God, when we find contained in it divers Contradictions, ſeveral ſtrange and incredible Stories, and other things greatly lyable to exception?

In anſwering the firſt Queſtion, This ought to be previouſly conſidered; That there were Advantages peculiar to the belief of thoſe who firſt received the Bible, or any parts of it, and lived in thoſe Times wherein it was firſt delivered, that we have not.

And

And we have likewise some Advantages (and those very considerable) to our belief, which they had not. They conversed with the Pen-Men themselves, (the Names of many of whom are to us wholly unknown: the Holy Ghost not judging it necessary to record them: foreseeing the Scriptures would descend to us upon other sufficient Evidence); They were able to judge of their personal Integrity, and the account they gave of their *Divine Commission*: were Eye-witnesses of the Miracles, saw the Original Writings; And in the Apostles times, many knew some of their Hands. These we have not; but we see the progress and success of this Book, which they saw not; We see this Book translated into all Languages: whole Nations converted by it: The Gospel spread all the World over, and the fulfilling of many Predictions since, which they could not then be Witnesses of: With many other great Effects of it; We see the Whole conjoyn'd, and the excellent Harmony of it, and the relation each part has to compleat the Design of the Whole: Are in divers respects upon different terms of judg-

judging now upon the Whole, from what men were in judging at first upon any particular parts.

But to come to a direct Answer to this Question: There could be but two wayes to ascertain men in their reception of any part of the *Bible*, when it first became publick.

First, By some outward visible Justification of the Persons imployed in that Service, to assure us that they were sent and commissionated from God.

Or secondly, From the Matter and the Nature of such Writings themselves. And herein a due consideration of those Times and Seasons in which the several parts of the *Bible* were written, and the then present state of things, and the order of writing it, will much inform us. *Moses*, who layed the first and great Foundation of the whole Fabrick in the five Books that he wrote, He had a justification Personal beyond all question; His Commission and Authority to do what he did, was sufficiently evident to all that conversed with him; There was all that could be expected to assure those that then lived, that God had imployed him;

For

For God admitted him openly to a personal converse with himself. We read in the nineteenth of *Exodus*, that the Lord said unto *Moses*, *Loe, I come to thee in a thick Cloud, that the People may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee for ever, &c.* He impowered him, upon many occasions, to work the greatest Miracles, that, since the World had a being, had ever been wrought: and openly to shame and out-doe all his Opposers, and all Pretenders that way. And whensoever there was a doubt made about this Divine Authority, or any contest with him upon that account, as in the case of *Korah*, and at other times, God plainly and openly from Heaven, in the sight of all the People, decided the Matter; to assure them, and all Generations to come, that *Moses* was no Impostor, but acted by a Divine Commission in what he then did.

And indeed, It being the first time that God revealed himself to the World in a written way, and published those Laws which were to be a Standard to all that succeeded, and the great *Corner-stone* of all that Revelation, that he would at any time after make to Man-kind; 'twas but

but neceſſary it ſhould be fixed and eſtabliſhed upon certain and unqueſtionable grounds. So that ſuch who lived in *Moſes* his time, could have no good reaſon at all to doubt, in the leaſt, of his ſincerity; for all was done that could be done to put that matter out of queſtion. And God viſibly ſhewed himſelf, as we find in the four and twentieth of *Exodus*, and his own glory amongſt them. For, 'tis ſaid, *They ſaw the Lord God of Iſrael, and there was under his feet, as it were, a paved work of a Saphire-ſtone, and as it were the Body of Heaven in its clearneſs.* Nor could there be any doubt raiſed, Whether the Laws and Precepts of *Moſes* were rightly recorded, and as he intended they ſhould: For, before his Death, he himſelf, by God's ſpecial command, in a publick Aſſembly, delivered over his Five Books to the *Levites* to be layed up in the ſides of the Ark. After *Moſes* his time, till our Saviours coming, and the writing of the *New Teſtament* (when there was again a Flood-gate of Divine Power let open in Mighty and Miraculous Operations) all the parts of the *Old Teſtament* that were at any time written (and they were

were not all Written till the time of *Ezra*; after whom, and the erection of the second Temple, God made no further Addition) all the other parts, I say, of the *Old Testament*, were principally to be judged of by what *Moses* at first established; Working of Miracles, after his time, was not to be the great and onely Rule of Prophesie and Revelation. God had declared and commanded the contrary; Nor indeed has the *Holy Ghost* thought fit to record to us (whatever might be done in that kind) that any one Pen-Man of the *Old Testament* wrought any Miracles after *Moses* his time. 'Tis a truth, that there was among the *Jews* a Succession of the Office of Prophets after *Moses*, and certain Schools of them, which first began, and were continued in the Cities of the *Levites*, who dwelt dispersed amongst all the other Tribes: And of many that were probably trayn'd up in those Schools we read in Scripture, as of *Gad* and *Nathan*, and other Seers and Prophets: That some of them wrote no part of the Bible, nor (that we read of) were any way extraordinarily imploy'd, but most likely were so stiled, because they had

had their education there, & were bred up and devoted to that Office and Employment: That God did often make use of those that were of that Prophetical Society in extraordinary Matters, I doubt not; But in dictating the *Bible*, God was pleased arbitrarily to chuse out what Instruments of conveyance he pleased, and confin'd not himself to any one sort of Men, nor to any Prophetical Office, to give us any assurance from thence in this case; For he sometimes chose men out of the Court, as he did *Isaiah* the Kings Nephew; And sometimes from the Herd, as he did *Amos* the Shepherd, who sayes himself, *He was neither a Prophet, nor the Son of a Prophet.* And God, in an extraordinary way, by the Word and the Prophesie that he gave such to utter, created them Prophets. And the greatest evidence of such mens Prophetical Authority arose (if no Miracles were wrought by them) from the Word they uttered: And if any were (of which we cannot be certain, the *Holy Ghost* being silent about it) from a conjunction of both. A Miracle wrought in confirmation of any Doctrine corresponding to what God by *Moses* had at first established,

was the greatest assurance that the *Judaical Church* after *Moses* was capable of; No false Prophet in those dayes ever arrived so far: That is, They never had the concurrence of a Personal and a Doctrinal Justification together; If any such wrought a Miracle to gain them a personal credit, yet their Doctrine was still faulty: And being to lead men from God, and to subvert those Laws of his by *Moses* so solemnly setled, That was an intimation sufficient from God's own direction, to discover and shame them. But, supposing the several Pen-Men of the *Old Testament* after *Moses*, wrought no Miracles at all, and that God made most of them Prophets by that very Employment, which 'tis certain he did, and that they were not previously in any such Office, so that nothing of that kind could give men any assurance; Yet by these three wayes, men might be then much secured in that case, in the first Edition of every distinct part of the Old Testament. First, From the known personal Sanctity and Integrity of the Writers themselves. God never made use of any ill men, or such as could come under any reasonable suspition of Imposture, to write any part

of

of the *Bible*; nor of any but such whom men in that Age wherein they lived had very good reason to credit. This being a certain and revealed Truth, that in writing all the parts of the *Bible*, 'twas *Holy Men still that Spake and Wrote*. Now, there could not be a more superlative imposture and wickedness, than to ascend the *Throne* of God, to speak in his Name, and pretend his Authority, without his Order. No Man (not wholly forsaken of all fear of God, and respect to men) could be supposed to make such an attempt: Nor could any Man of known Piety and Honesty be reasonably suspected of it. Secondly, and chiefly, From the conformity of what was then writen to the Laws and Precepts of *Moses*, setled upon such unquestionable evidence; for whatever was superstructed upon that Foundation, came under the same Justification; So that if any Writings were published in God's Name, that appeared to be (as all the other parts of the Old Testament did) but a further discovery and promise of the *Messiah*, a renewal of those Threatnings and Promises in *Moses* to that People, and a further promotion of those Holy Laws, and that Religion and Worship by

him established, there was no absolute necessity of Miracles in such cases. If any man will suppose there might be in those times Books piously written, and grounded upon the Doctrine of *Moses*, that came not from any *Divine Inspiration*; in judging of which Men might be possibly deceived and mistaken. I answer, Either such Books pretended to a Divine Mission from God, or they did not; If they did not, no man could be indangered by them; If they did, They must either be written by true Prophets or False; No true Prophets would do it; And 'tis not reasonable to think any false prophets should; because they could serve no Design by it: Nor could the Devil, or any ill Instruments any way promote their own Interests by perswading men to serve the true God in the right way; Nor do we find that in Fact any such thing ever was. Thirdly, There appeared in most, if not all, the parts of a *Bible*, a peculiar *Majesty*, a savour of *Divine Authority* in a more than ordinary way; A great and eminent difference, as the Prophet *Jeremiah* sayes, between the Chaff and the Wheat. Nor is it fit to suppose but that which came by an immediate Inspiration from

from God, ſhould carry ſome Impreſſions of his Wiſdom & Power, and be ſome way differenced from the common Writings of weak and fallible men. Beſides, from many other Circumſtances attending the firſt Edition of the ſeveral parts of the *Bible*, relating to the Matter written, and the Authors that wrote, might God give a further evidence to their Divine Authority, of which we are now wholly ignorant; And it would be perhaps ſomewhat of curioſity, and of little uſe to enquire after; And ſome of them are recorded to us in the Scripture it ſelf; As, particularly, the foretelling of future Events, that accordingly came to paſs.

Two wayes God himſelf had previouſly appointed by *Moſes* for the diſcovery of all falſe pretentions to Revelation.

Firſt, If any Pretenders that way came to ſeduce men from the true God, and that Divine Worſhip of his then eſtabliſhed, God commands, They ſhould be rejected.

And ſecondly, If they foretold things that came not to paſs, they were no way to credit them.

So we find it in the eighteenth of *Deu-*

teronomy, When a Prophet ſpeaketh in the Name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to paſs, that is the thing which the Lord hath not ſpoken, but the Prophet hath ſpoken it preſumptuouſly: thou ſhalt not be afraid of him. The certain predicting of future events, was an unqueſtionable evidence of a Divine Commiſſion: And this way many of the Prophets were juſtifyed in thoſe Ages wherein they lived. As particularly the Prophet *Hoſea*, who with the Prophet *Amos*, was ſent to the Ten Tribes at the ſame time that *Iſaiah* and *Micah* were to *Judah*: And in the ſixth year of *Hezekiah* (to which time it appears *Hoſea* himſelf ſurvived) his Propheſie long before againſt the Ten Tribes was actually fulfilled, and the deſtruction he propheſied of, came actually and viſibly upon the Ten Tribes at that time, by the Hand of the King of *Aſſyria*. And others of them had the like Juſtification, though ſometimes it fell out to be later, and the events of their Propheſies could not be known till after-ages. Nor did any one Pen-Man of the Scriptures, or any Prophet of God, ever miſtake in a tittle in this kind; For although ſometimes the judgements they prophetically

ly threatned, were not actually inflicted at thoſe times, they were threatned ſo to be; yet that could not be the leaſt derogation from the truth of their Propheſies, becauſe God ſtill reſerved a ſupream and ſovereign power of Pardon and Forgiveneſs to himſelf in ſuch caſes: And all ſuch prophetical Threatnings were ſtill denounced with a reſerve in caſe of repentance; And God himſelf, to juſtifie his own Prophets, did publickly declare thus much, *At what Inſtant I ſhall ſpeak concerning a Nation, or concerning a Kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and deſtroy it; If that Nation, againſt whom I have pronounced, turn from the evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them, &c.*

But the total and final deciſion of all Queſtions that could ariſe among the *Jews* touching the ſeveral parts of the Old Teſtament, God was pleaſed to make in the times of *Ezra*, and that famous Synagogue, That after ſo long and ſad a captivity, aſſembled to reform what was amiſs, and to revive the glory of that decayed Church and State, (which God had promiſed to reſtore and continue amongſt thoſe two Tribes of *Judah* and *Benjamin*,

until the *Messiah* should come) several of the last Prophets being personally present, They, by a divine direction, collected all the Parts of the Old Testament together, (some of which, as the Prophesies of *Jeremiah* and *Amos*, and other Prophesies sent from God, and which came by *Divine Inspiration*, were wholly rejected by the corrupt ruling part of the *Judaical Church* in those times wherein they were first uttered) made a perfect separation, not only between the Works of True Prophets and False, and such Writings as came by Divine Inspiration, and such as were only of Humane Extraction; but between such as were to be of a perpetual continuance, and a standing Rule to the Church, and such as related onely to particular Cases, and were not so. They, by God's direction, punctually setled the Canon of the Old Testament, put a perfect period to all Doubts in those times about this whole business; and in that settlement of the Scripture then made, the Jewish Church fully acquiesced, and to it firmly adhered till the times of Christ and the Apostles. From whose Divine Authority we have a re-establishment of all that was then done.

For

For the New Teſtament, as God was pleaſed to eſtabliſh the firſt Foundation of all Written Revelation in *Moſes* his time, upon evidence from Heaven beyond all compaſs of Queſtion; ſo the compleating and finiſhing what God intended that way, the laying the Top-ſtone of that Fabrick, (which was done in the writing of the New Teſtament) was accompanyed with ſuch manifeſt Effects of a Divine and Almighty Power, that no man that lived in thoſe times could make any reaſonable doubt about it. There were in this caſe the greateſt Miracles to confirm the moſt excellent Doctrine, and 'tis not poſſible to be upon ſurer grounds in point of Revelation. The Miracles were then apparent and viſible; And the excellency of the Doctrine appeared theſe two wayes.

Firſt, That in it ſelf ſimply conſidered, it introduced a Religion wherein all the great and deſireable ends both of God and Man (in the judgment of all unprejudiced Reaſon) were to the utmoſt attained, and wherein all that the World had in that kind at any time before arrived at, was far out-done and exceeded,

And

And secondly, In a relative way, in that it evidently appeared (and that in a very singular and extraordinary manner) to be the great accomplishment of all that God had before promised and foretold: The natural Off-spring of the Old Testament, and that which the Scriptures, before written, throughout, travelled withal; Indeed, the Genuine Issue of all former Revelation, and so was incircled with all that *Divine Justification* that any former Revelation had been at any time accompanied with. And in the distinct publication of all the particular Parts of the New Testament, men had these two grounds of satisfaction in those times: First, (If we admit that Epistle to the *Hebrews* to come either from St. *Paul*, or some other Apostolical Hand, of the latter of which the Epistle it self sufficiently assures us; And for the former, there seems to be good evidence from some passages in St. *Peter*: And no man can be so reasonably supposed to write a Determination of that grand Question then on foot, about the abolition of the whole Judaical Policy, as the great Apostle of the Gentiles) I say, If we admit this Epistle to come from an Apostolical Hand;

Hand; Every Part of it was then written by Apoſtles and Evangeliſts, men not onely perfectly knowing in all the Tranſactions of our Saviour, but every one of them then known to be men of extraordinary Endowments, in Office under Him, and with the higheſt Delegation of his own Power entruſted by Him. And as the Writing of the Old Teſtament ended with the Prophets, ſo the writing of the New had its period in the Apoſtles. Secondly, All the ſeveral Parts, at ſeveral times, and by ſeveral hands written, appear ſo to promote one and the ſame Deſign, are ſo much the ſame in Doctrine, do ſo harmonize in the ſame Tendency and End, and have ſuch a relation each to other, that whatever Reaſons there were in the general to ſatisfie men in thoſe times about the Truth of our Saviour, and the Religion by him eſtabliſhed, (and there was all that could be expected from Heaven in that caſe) the ſame would go very far to reſolve all ſuch Doubts as could be made about any particular Parts of the New Teſtament then written.

Secondly,

Secondly, How can we now come certainly to know the true Compass and Extent of *Holy Writ?* How can we know we have now contained in our *Bibles* all that was written by a Divine Inspiration, and intended as a Rule to the Church, and no more? That is, How can we now be safely assured about the Canon of the Scripture, and be able upon good grounds to say, what is Canonical, and what is not?

'Tis too apparent a Truth, that nothing by the power of its own worth and excellency, has ever been able to scape contempt and reproach from the unruly wills and debauched minds of corrupt and unreasonable men. The *Bible* has met with its share in this kind. Some, upon Fanatical Pretences, have despised and rejected the Whole; Others have mangled and severed it as themselves thought good; receiving some part only as Divine, and rejecting the rest as they pleased. Of this *Irenæus*, *Tertullian*, *Epiphanius*, St. *Austin*, and many of the Christian Writers have given us a large account. The

Mani-

Manichees rejected the whole body of the Old Teſtament, as coming from an Evil God. The *Ptolemaites* (as *Epiphanius* tells us) rejected all the Books of *Moſes*. The *Gnoſticks*, with ſome other Hereticks, rejected the whole Book of *Pſalms*. *Cerdon*, and after him *Marcion*, rejected all the Goſpels but that of St. *Luke*, the *Acts of the Apoſtles*, and divers other parts of the New Teſtament, as we find by *Tertullian*. The *Valentinians* rejected all the Goſpels but that of St. *John*, as we ſee in *Irenæus*. Others rejected all that St. *John* wrote. The *Ebionites* received no Goſpel but that of St. *Matthew*, and rejected in groſs all the Epiſtles of St. *Paul*.

In a word, There is not one Part of the *Bible*, from the firſt to the laſt, that has ſcap'd the reprobation of ſome bad Men. But all ſuch attempts were ſoon blown away, expired in the Birth, bore about them their own ſhame and reproach; made no conſiderable battery upon the Truth in any Age; Nor did they reach further than the vitiated Minds and corrupt Breaſts of ſuch Profligate Hereticks as were the firſt Authors of them.

In

In answering to this Question, How we come to be well assured about the Canon of the *Bible*, and that those Books now received by the Church of *England*, and other Protestant Churches as such, are all Canonical, and no other.

Two things only will occur, that are of any seeming moment; In the due consideration of which, all will be said that is needful about this Matter.

First, How we come to reject out of our Canon those Books commonly called *Apocryphal*, which were written (at least all but one of them) during the times of the Old Testament?

And secondly, Upon what grounds we now receive some particular parts of the New Testament, which have sometimes layen under question?

If we mistake in the first, we have less in our Bibles than we ought: If in the latter, we have much more than we should. About the first, concerning the several parts of the Old Testament, there is amongst Christians themselves a present Disagreement: But concerning the other, the whole Christian World is, at this day, of the same opinion.

For the First, That there is good Reason

ſon to reject thoſe Books commonly called the *Apocrypha*, that they were not written by any Divine Inſpiration, nor ſent us from GOD, as any part of thoſe Supream Laws by which he intended to rule and judge the World, and ſo ought not to be reckoned within the Canon, will be made very evident to any reaſonable Judge, upon theſe Conſiderations following.

First, After the time of *Eſdras*, and the erection of the ſecond Temple, 'tis univerſally agreed by all the moſt Antient *Jews* and *Chriſtians*, that the *Jews* had no Prophet amongſt them, Nor did GOD raiſe up any Man with an Extraordinary Spirit from the time of *Malachi* (who is agreed to be the laſt Prophet) till *John the Baptiſt*, Which was for the ſpace of four hundred and odde years. Now 'tis ſufficiently evident that theſe Apocryphal Books were all written after the time of *Malachi*, and ſo can be of no extraordinary Miſſion; And if any of them had been written before, and had been extant in *Ezra*'s time (which they were not) it had been an unanſwerable Reaſon for their Rejection now, Becauſe they were not received then. For, 'tis

well

well known that none of these Books now in question were by Him incorporated with the rest of the Bible, nor were within the Canon at that time setled. That the Jews had no Prophets (by whom all parts of the Old-Testament were written: For the Church is built upon the Foundation of the Prophets and Apostles; And the whole of the Old-Testament is called Prophecy) nor any Men of an Extraordinary Spirit amongst them after the Captivity, both Jews and Christians generally agree. *Josephus* is express in it; in his first Book against *Appion* he tells us, that from the time of *Artaxerxes*, though certain Books had been written, yet they deserved not the same Credit and Belief that the Sacred Scriptures did, because there was no succession of Prophets amongst them. Saint *Austine* in the 45th Chapter of his 18th Book *De Civitate Dei*, sheweth at large that the Jews had no Prophecy after *Ezra*'s time. And the same, *Eusebius* affirmeth in his *Demonstrationes Evangelicæ*; *Post Zachariam & Malachiam non fuisse amplius apud Judæos Prophetam*; *Et a reditu ex Captivitate ad tempora Servatoris nullum habuerint Judæi sacrum Volumen.* The

Jews

Jews had no Prophets after *Zachary* and *Malachi*, nor any Sacred Writings after the Captivity, till our Saviour's time. And some of these very Books tell us as much themselves: For, in the first Book of the *Maccabees* Chap. 9. 'tis there said, That there was then great Tribulation in Israel, such as had not been since the dayes *that there had been no Prophet in Israel*, (relating to *Ezra*'s time.) And indeed it appears very plain from the Scripture it self, that there were no Divine Writings published between the Prophecy of *Malachi*, and the writing of the Gospels. For the Evangelists take things up just where he left them, and begin the Gospel from the end of *Malachi*'s Prophecy. For, he ending his Prophecy at *John the Baptist*, under the Type and Title of *Elias*, and the Evangelists beginning the Gospel with Him, (for St. *Mark* expressly declares the ending of that Prophecy to be the beginning of the Gospel); There is a visible combination from thence, from that period of Prophesie, of the Old and New Testament together.

Secondly, All the Writers of the Old Testament were Prophets to the House of *Israel*, and to the Church of the *Jews*; and their Writings and Prophesies were directed chiefly to them. And so they were all writ (except some Passages in *Daniel* and *Ezra* that were written in the *Chaldee* Dialect, to which the *Jews* had in their Captivity been much accustomed) in their own Native Language, the Language of *Canaan*, which was the *Hebrew*. But these Books were confessedly most of them first written in *Greek*, and could be of no use at all to the *Jews* at *Jerusalem*, and in *Palestine*; nor understood by any but the dispersed *Hellenists*: And so were no way likely to be sent from the *Holy Ghost* to that Church, who never owned any Scripture for Canonical but what was in *Hebrew*, a Language peculiar to them. And the *Bibles* they constantly used till our Saviours time in their Synagogues were all in *Hebrew*.

Thirdly, There is, in most of these Books, some eminent discovery of their own Humane Extraction: As in the second of *Macc.* 2. 24. The Author of that Book,

Book, whoever he were, tells us that he had borrowed what he wrote out of *Jason* of *Cyrene*, and contracted five Books of his into one Volumn. And so what he there wrote, he is so far from fathering it on the *Holy Ghost*, or any Dictates of his, that he plainly confesseth 'twas none of his own, but the bare Epitomy of another mans Writings, and desires to be excused if he had not done it well. And 'tis most notoriously evident to every common Reader, that many of these Books contain such ridiculous Stories, and gross Absurdities, that without high impiety, and great contradiction to all those Natural Notions we have of God, they cannot be imputed to the *Holy Ghost* as their Author.

Fourthly, These Books were never received by the Church of the *Jews* into their Canon, nor are to this day: And so, during the times of the Old Testament, were never received by any Church, (for there was then no other) which is most absurd to conceive of any parts of God's Written and Supream Laws; As also that the *Jews*, to whom in a most pe-

culiar way the Oracles of God were committed, and who had the custody of all God's Sacred Records, and were (as St. *Austin* calls them) God's & the Churches great *Library-Keepers*, should so notoriously err, as to reject (for, not to receive into their Canon is to reject) so great a part of the Bible. 'Tis somewhat strange that those of the Roman Church (with whom chiefly we contest in this Matter, and who annex to the Church an infallible Judgement) should imagine the Church of the Jews to fall into so great and gross a mistake in so fundamental a matter. That the Jewish Church never heretofore received these Apocryphal Books into their Canon, nor do to this day, is a thing that with the least colour of Reason cannot be denyed. That they do not to this day, is known all the World over, wheresoever the Jews are: And their Bibles are to be seen. That the Ancient Church of the Jews, before the times of our Saviour, had no other Books within their Canon, than those we now have, is evident from the testimony of *Josephus*, in his first Book against *Appion*, who there tells us what Books the Jews reckoned Cano-

Canonical, and ſayes, They are onely twenty two in number, (according to the number of Letters in their Alphabet); and reckons thoſe very Books we now receive as onely Canonical; Other Books, he ſayes, there were written after the Captivity, but they were never numbred with the Sacred Records. *Origen*, St. *Jerome*, and many other of the Chriſtian Writers have largely proved the ſame. Thoſe of the Roman Church, who have turn'd every Stone to eaſe themſelves from the dint of this *Argument*, have found no other countenance that ever theſe Books received from the Jews, to make us ſuppoſe they received them into their Canon, but that in ſome places, ſome few of the *Helleniſt Jews* that lived remote from *Paleſtine*, had annexed ſome of theſe *Books* to their *Septuagint Bibles*. But it no where in the leaſt appears, That ſuch *Helleniſts* themſelves had any eſteem of them as Canonical Writings: Nor can it any more be proved from thence that they had, than it can, That we in *England* receive them into our Canon, becauſe they are bound up with ſome of our *Bibles*. And never were any of theſe Books annexed to the *Hebrew-Bibles* uſed at *Jeruſalem*, and in

Palestine; nor were any of them ever read or admitted into their Synagogues there. In truth, This matter, in point of Fact, is so notorious and evident, that *Bellarmine* himself makes an ingenuous confession of it, and sayes plainly, *Hos omnes Libros* (speaking of these Apocryphal Books) *ad unum rejici ab Hebræis*, That every one of these Books were rejected by the Church of the Jews, *Contr.* 1. *lib.* 1. *ch.* 10. And confirms the same out of St. *Jerome*. And if so, we have then not only the Judgment of the Judaical Church in this case, (which is singly sufficient: For, 'twere a ridiculous contradiction to make any Books part of the Old Testament now, which were not so received then). But we have also a more infallible determination; For our Saviour and the Apostles fully and constantly approved the Old Testament, as the Jews were then possessed of it. 'Twere absurd to suppose that our Saviour should with so much exactness, reduce all to the Rule of the Scripture, and yet tacitly approve, and silently pass over so great a mistake about the Rule it self. Our Saviour directs the Jews to search the Scriptures as they

they then had them, as being perfect and compleat: Appeals to their own Bibles upon all occasions in his own defence: Expounded *Moses*, the *Psalms*, and the Prophets, as those to whom he spake were acquainted with them, and as they were then extant; Nay, he himself read and preached in their Synagogues out of the Scriptures, as he there found them, and as they were there publickly used. And no man can soberly imagine that our Saviour would go about to instruct the People out of any false and imperfect Rule. The Apostles likewise upon all occasions made use of the Old Testament as they found the Jews possessed of it; Nor have we the least intimation that the Jews were either mistaken in the number of those Books they received, or that the least alteration had been made in those Books, since the times wherein they were first written.

And 'tis as evident that the Old Tement (as the Jews then had it, and as our Saviour and the Apostles approved it) descended down to the Christian Church, and was constantly so received. The Primitive Writers agree universally in it.

Cyprian, Epiphanius, Athanasius, Nazianzen, all bear witness to it. *Cyril* Bishop of *Jerusalem,* after he has reckoned up to his *Catechumini*, the 22 Books of the Old Testament we now receive, adds, *Hos lege viginti duos; Cum Apocryphis nil habe negotii,* Catechis. 4. *Read these two and twenty Books; But meddle not with the Apocrypha. Origen,* quoted for it at large by *Eusebius,* in his History, reckons up the very same twenty two Books for the Canonical parts of the Old Testament: And so does St. *Jerome,* and expressly reckons the other *Apocryphal.* The same we find in *Ruffinus,* who sayes, The *Apocryphal* Books they never antiently called *Libros Canonicos*, but *Ecclesiasticos.* And the first Council we read of that entred into a consideration of this Matter, which was that of *Laodicea,* about the year 364. in their 59 *Canon*, declare the Canonical Books of the Old Testament to be the very same, and no other then those we now receive. Nor were these Apocryphal Books ever otherwise reckoned, either in the Jewish or Christian Church, than as humane and fallible Writings, till the late Assembly at *Trent* were pleased to declare them otherwise.

These

These things must needs seem sufficient to any reasonable man to clear up that doubt on the one hand, Whether we have not less in our *Bibles* than we indeed ought to have! Because that besides what the Roman Church hath of late done to Canonize these Apochryphal Writings, no other addition to the Bible has been at any time attempted, that merits the least consideration. I proceed to the doubt on the other hand: And that is, How we may be reasonably secured, that our *Bibles* contains in them no more then they should! That is, upon what ground we receive some Books in the New Testament! The Epistle to the *Hebrews*, the Epistle of St. *James*, the second Epistle of St. *Peter*, the Epistle of *Jude*, the 2 and 3 Epistles of *John*, and the *Apocalyps*! Of all which there has formerly been some doubt made! In the solution of which, I shall endeavour these two things: First, To shew what were most probably the first and original grounds of such Doubts! And secondly, To shew that those doubts then ought to be of no prevalency with us now; And that there is, at this time, no good reason to make the least doubt of any part of the New Testament, as we are

now

now in possession of it. All the Doubts that have arisen about any parts of the New Testament, were most probably these two wayes occasioned. First, 'Tis obvious that the New Testament was writ in several parts, at several times, and not all composed together. The Whole became not publick but by many steps and degrees: Had several former and latter Editions; That is, some parts that were first writ, were copyed out by those that had the Originals, and con-joyn'd, and so dispers'd: And other parts still added as they were written, and became publick. Now 'tis easie to conceive that some parts that were after added to such Bibles as first came out, might be at first questioned and doubted of, by such who had the former Editions, and were not fully informed about the after Addition of other parts. And so it has fallen out in the publication of most Systemes of Humane Laws that have come out gradually and by parts, and not in a full and intire Body at once. Secondly, 'Tis very probable that many Christians that lived in those first Times, by reason of their distance from those places where some parts of the New Testament first became publick,

ick, might be, for a considerable time, it may be till after the deaths of their Authors) without any notice of them; And upon that account some doubts about such parts might arise, because they had come to their knowledge no sooner, especially if any such parts seemed to favour or countenance any particular Sect or Opinion, as the Epistle to the *Hebrews* did that of the *Novations*, and the *Apocalyps* that of the *Chiliasts*). And this is most likely to be the true reason why some of the Epistles (and we know 'twas about the Epistles that the doubts chiefly were) were at any time questioned, especially such as were more remotely, and uncertainly directed to the scattered Jews, as that of St. *James*, that to the *Hebrews*, and that of St. *Peter*, which were no way likely to be so soon, or so commonly known to the generality of Christians; Nor could they be so easie to come by as those Epistles sent to *Rome*, *Corinth*, and *Ephesus*, and those great and publick Cities, from whence the fame of them would soon spread; and Copies were upon much easier terms to be had, because 'twas certainly known where the Originals were.

Secondly

Secondly. There is no good Reason, from any Question that was made heretofore, to raise any Doubts now about any Parts of the New-Testament; And that for these three Reasons: First, Because these Books in question were most generally received at first, and doubted of only by some, and those such who had least information about them. And this is very evident; Because we find them frequently quoted, as Canonical Scripture, by many of the most ancient Christian-Writers, in those Ages next the Apostles. *Tertullian* (except the second Epistle of St. *Peter*) hath in his Works quoted, as Canonical Scripture, every Book of the New-Testament we now receive. And St. *Jerome*, speaking in his Epistle *ad Dardanum* of the Epistle to the *Hebrews*, and some other of those Books about which we now discourse, sayes, *We receive them not from the Custom of this Time, but from the Authority of the most Primitive Writers.* Secondly, They contain nothing in them but what does plainly harmonize with the rest of the Bible, and is generally witnessed unto by other Books, about which no question hath been at any time made. And of this there can be

be no doubt, unleſs it be concerning the *Revelation*, which yet contains a moſt Admirable, though Myſterious Agreement with the Books of *Moſes*, the Prophecies of *Ezekiel* and *Daniel*, and divers other parts of the Bible. And to this Book (beſides that the ſuitableneſs of Events thereunto, and the notorious fulfilling of many Prophetical paſſages in it, has put its Divine Authority out of all queſtion) we have as great a Teſtimony from Antiquity, as can in ſuch a caſe well be expected. *Juſtin Martyr*, who lived very near the Apoſtle *John* himſelf, in his Dialogue with *Tryphon*, cites it as the Writing of St. *John*, and without the leaſt queſtion, aſcribes it to him. *Irenæus* (who lived ſome ſmall time after *Juſtin*, and was the Scholar of *Polycarp*, who was the Scholar of St. *John*) ſayes poſitively, 'Twas written by St. *John* the Apoſtle. And that he was well aſſured thereof from ſome (moſt probably *Polycarp*) that had ſeen the Apoſtle *John* himſelf, and perſonally converſed with him. *Lib.* 4. *cap.* 37. and *Lib.* 5. And *Tertullian* in his 4th Book againſt *Marcion*, ſayes, *Though* Marcion *did reject the Apocalyps as none of* St. John's, *yet* (ſayes he) *the ſucceſſion of*

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Bishops traced to the beginning, will establish Him as the certain and undoubted Author of it. Thirdly, God has, in a providential way, determined this matter. For, those that at first questioned those Books (when the heat of primitive Persecutions were somewhat abated, the Church had free intercourse and communication together, and came to be better informed) received them: All doubts about them are now vanished. *Luthur*, and some with him in *Germany* (who were the last that revived any doubts of that kind) upon second and more deliberate thoughts, recanted their Error. All Christians are now at an Agreement about them (the Supreamest Establishment that can be of Canonical-Authority) even the Roman Church themselves receive the *Apocalyps* into their Canon, although many passages in it seem very particularly directed against them. Indeed, the heavenly lustre of these Books is broke forth like the Sun in his strength, has over-spred the whole Horizon of the Christian Church; And where ever the Gospel is owned, these Books are received with that Veneration that becomes due to such Sacred Writings.

The

The *Church* of *England* Judges the doubts that have been at any time made about any parts of the *New Teſtament* not worthy of our Notice. And therefore in the ſixth Article it is thus expreſſed. *In the Name of the holy Scriptures we do underſtand thoſe Canonical Books of the Old and New Teſtament, of whoſe Authority was never any doubt in the Church:* That is, no *conſiderable* doubt; no *general* doubt in the *Whole Church*; Nor indeed any ſuch doubt as ought to diſturb either the *Churches determination*, or any particular mans judgment about this matter. For it cannot be ſhewed that any *One intire Church*, or that any *National* or *Provincial Council*, or indeed that any Conſiderable part of the *Chriſtian* World, in any Publick *Confeſſions*, *Catechiſms*, or otherwiſe, have *rejected any* of thoſe *Books* we now reckon within the *Canon*. The moſt Conſiderable Doubt that we find made about any one of them was, about the *Epiſtle* to the *Hebrews*, which for ſome time was doubted of in the *Roman Church*; And yet *Euſebius* ſays onely, It was doubted of *a quibuſdam in Eccleſia Romana*, by ſome in the *Roman Church*; and 'tis certain, much of that doubt was, whether St. *Paul* were the *Authour* of it or no? But to conclude an Anſwer to this Queſtion, let theſe two things be Conſidered. Firſt, under

under the *Old Testament*, so soon as all the Parts of it were finished, the *Canon* of *That* was exactly settled by men of an *infallible Spirit*, in the times of *Esdras*, and those last Prophets contemporary with him; and so no further Doubt was, or could reasonably be made about that. Secondly, under the *New Testament*, it pleased God so to order it, that he that closed up the whole *Bible*, and wrote the *Conclusion* of it, so far *out-lived* all the other *Pen-men*, that he himself might very well see the *Whole conjoyned*, and deliver it over to the *Church*, *intire* as we now have it. The Apostle St. *John* not onely survived *Titus*, and that famous *Destruction* of the *Temple*, and the *Jews*, in his time, but he lived through *Domitian*'s time, and *Cocceius Nerva*'s time, to the Reign of the *Emperour Trajan*, which was somewhat above a Hundred years after our *Saviours* Birth, and sixty and odd after his *Crucifixion*; so *Irenæus* tells us *lib.* 2. *p.* 192. And *some other* of the *Apostles* it should seem lived long; for the same Author says, that there were in his time *Saniores qui non solum Johannem viderint sed & alios Apostolos*: *Elders that had not onely seen S. John, but others of the Apostles. That the Canon of the New Testament was established and setled by Apostolical Authority* seems very probable. *S. Austin*

contra

contra Faust. Man. lib. 11. *cap.* 5. and in his 19. *Epist.* positively affirms it, *Distincta est* (says he) *à posteriorum libris excellentia Canonica authoritatis veteris & Novi Testamenti, quæ Apostolorum confirmata temporibus. Saint Jerome* says, *Johannem omnium longissimè vixisse & videre libros omnes & confirmare potuisse, & si qui fictitij liberi ederentur, eos à sacris & verè Canonicis distinguere. That the Apostle* John *out-lived all the rest of the Apostles, that he might peruse and confirm all the Parts of the New Testament and distinguish them from all counterfeit Writings, if any such came abroad.* And he further adds, *That some Spurious writings concerning the actions of S.* Paul *were brought to him, and that he, by his Apostolical Authority, condemned them. Tertullian, de Prescript.* says expressly, *The Canon of the Bible is founded upon Apostolical Authority.* And *Eusebius* gives this plain testimony to it, *Narrant veteres Johannem Asiaticarum Ecclesiarum rogatu, Germanum Scripturæ Canonem constituisse. The antients tell us* (says he) *that St.* John, *upon the request of the Asiatick Churches, settled the true Canon of Scripture.* 'Tis certain that S. *John* before his death, made his abode much at *Sardis* and *Ephesus*, and amongst those *Asiatick Churches*; For after the death of *Domitian*, he was restored from his

Banishment by the *Emperour Nerva*, and returned from *Patmos* into *Asia*, and there governed the *Churches* until his death. And 'tis extreamly probable, that upon their desire, he then fully settled the *Canon* of the *New Testament*; for that there was then occasion for the doing of it, we find by *Eusebius* his *History* of those times. And it is evident from S. *John* himself that the *Church* of *Ephesus* had been attempted by *false Apostles* in those days; and whatever Doubts of that kind were then extant, we cannot otherwise suppose but that they would be proposed to him, and End in his *Apostolical determination*. So that if we lay all these things together, St. *Johns* living so long after all the Parts of the *New Testament*, but the *Revelation*, were Written: And his surviving some very considerable time after the Writing of *that*, (for it is most probable that he received those *Visions* and wrote them in the end of the Reign of *Domitian*) his *closing* the whole with that *Book*; after which, he declares (as many think) by pronouncing a Curse to him that should *add* to it, or *diminish* from it) that there was to be no further *Revelation* expected, having therein given a full account of the State of the *Church* to the end of the world. Considering the Doubts that were then extant about some Parts, amongst such

such as had not a thorough Information about them, and that *False apostles* did then appear, considering of how great a Concern it was then, and would be to all future Ages to have the *Canon* of the whole *Bible* settled by an *Infallible judgment*; and considering the material Evidence we have from many *Primative writers*, That indeed it was so. All these things considered, there seemes very probable Ground to believe that the *Apostle John* before he left the world, did fully Determine this matter; and 'tis most likely, *that as the Knowledge* of what *he* had done, came to be publisht abroad, the *Doubts* that were then made *dis-appeared*. And we that live in these latter Ages see that all the Questions and Doubts that have at any time been, are perfectly *vanisht*, and the whole *bopy* of the *New Testament* hath now gained an *Universal reception*.

Thirdly, *How can we that have not the* Originals *of the Scriptures, not the* Autographa's *of those that wrote them, but onely the* Copies *of them, and most but the* Translations *of those* Copies, *rest assured we have Gods Mind as it was first delivered?*

In Answering to this Question, it must be acknowledged that the *Original Records* of every Part of the *Bible* did at first consist of *Perishable matter*, and have undergone the common Fate of all other Writings. 'Tis evident it was not the pleasure of God that the *Authority* of the *Scriptures* should be terminated singly in them, but be of a much farther Extension, and of a perpetual Duration. 'Tis not to be doubted but that the *Apographa's Copies* truely taken from the *Originals* of any part of the *Bible*, were of equal *Authority* with the *Originals* themselves. 'Twas not the *Paper*, nor the *Ink*, nor the *Hand* wherein they were writ, nor any thing Circumstantial of that kind, but the *Matter* it self, as dictated by the *Holy Ghost*, that gave Authority to them. And wheresoever that *Matter* is truely contained, there is also the same *Authority* present. The great Question in these dayes will be, Whether those Copies we have of the Scriptures in those *Original Languages* in which they were first Writ, be *True*! and whether they have not been since *Defaced* or *Corrupted*?

The Satisfaction that ought to be given to this Inquiry, must arise these two wayes; First by considering the *Scriptures* themselves in their present posture; And Secondly, by considering

ſidering ſuch *Circumſtances* as attended their firſt Tranſcription, and the *various Copies* that were then, and have been ſince, taken of them. I begin with the *Latter.* Firſt, the *Old Teſtament* we know was delivered over as it firſt became written to the *Church* of the *Jews*, and committed by God himſelf to their Cuſtody: And 'twas *they* alone that had the Care incumbent upon them, punctually to *Tranſcribe*, and ſafely to ſecure it. That they performed this Truſt with great Care and exactneſs, and delivered the *Old Teſtament* over *intire* to the *Chriſtian Church*, we have good cauſe to believe: and that both upon general, and ſome more particular ground. Firſt, upon General ground; 'Tis notorious that the *Jews* had the higheſt value imaginable of their *Law*, and prized it above *all* elſe they poſſeſſed. Both *Joſephus* and *Philo* tell us, that the *Jews* would rather have ſuffered a thouſand Deaths, then that the leaſt thing ſhould be once *altered* in the *Divine Laws* and *Statutes* of their Nation. The miraculous power upon which the firſt Foundation of it was Eſtabliſhed, had imprinted in that People an *indelible veneration* of it. Secondly, it was the *Municipal Law* of their Countrey, and that by which all matters of right were daily Adjudged, and by which each mans Property a-

mongst them was maintained and secured. Thirdly, their *Law* was not onely the *Glory* of their Nation, and the Foundation of their Political and Ecclesiastical being, but it was also the great Title they had to their Countrey. The *Scriptures* contained in themselves the *Deeds* by which *God* himself conveyed to them the Land of *Canaan*, and gave them the highest Right to possess it. 'Tis not hard from hence to conceive that the *Jews* would be careful of such a Book, wherein their *Bodies*, their *Souls*, their *Estates*, their *Honour*, and indeed their *All* was so much concerned. Secondly, it appears more *particularly* and in *fact* that they were so; For after that by Gods Providential disposal, *Ezra* and that Famous *Synagogue* with him, had exactly settled their *Canon*, and delivered over the *Scriptures* pure and intire to the People at their return out of *Babylon*, the indefatigable Care of the succeeding *Massorites*, from those very Times downward, to preserve every *Letter* and *Syllable* of the sacred *Text intire*, is notoriously known to all that converse with the *Jewish Writers*; even to so great an *exactness* had they arrived, that they knew how *often* every *Letter* was used in the *Bible*: And indeed they took such a course to preserve the *Original Text* intire, that it was morally Impossible that

that the least considerable *Alteration* or *Change* could at any time be made in it. *Eusebius* speaks with great Wonder of the Industry and Care of the *Jews* in this matter, *Mirabile mihi videtur* (says he) *duobus annorum millibus, imo majore tempore jam ferè transacto (non enim exquisitissimè annorum possum dicere numerum) Nec verbum unum in Lege illius esse immutatum, sed Centies unusquisque Judæorum moritur, quam Lege Mosaicæ derogavit. It seems wonderful to me, that for the space of two thousand years and upward (for I cannot exactly reckon the number of years) not so much as one word should be Changed in their Law, but that every Jew would rather dye a hundred times over, then derogate in the least from it.* And that this care of the *Judaical Church* was, by Gods blessing effectual and successful for the securing of the *Old Testament* from all *maime* or *Imperfection*, and the least considerable *alteration* from what it *was* when it was first Delivered; There needs no other Evidence then that our *Saviour* and the *Apostles* fully *approved* it as the *Jews* were then in possession of it, and never charged them with the least Guilt either of *Corruption* or *Neglect* in that kind. And to suppose the *Jews* have Corrupted it since (considering that it was near three hundred years before our *Saviours* time, translated into *Greek*, and

that any *after-corruption* must needs have been manifestly *Discovered* from thence; and considering how much of it is *quoted* in the *New*, (is very absurd.) So thought St. *Jerome* in his time, *Si quis dixerit, post adventum Christi & predicationem Apostolorum, Libros, Hebræos fuisse Falsatos risum tenere non potero, ut Salvator & Apostoli ita Testimonia protulerint sicut à Judæis falsandi erant.* *If any man think the Old Testament* (says he) *falsifyed after our Saviours coming, I can scarce forbear smiling to think, that our Saviour and the Apostles should quote the Old Testament so, as the Jews should falsify it after their times.* And with the same Contempt speaks *Origen*, and S. *Austin* of such a vain and absurd supposition.

That we have also good reason to believe, that the *New Testament* is safely and intirely, and without any Considerable *variation* from what it was when it was first written, descended down to us, will likewise appear; first, from the *Circumstances* attending its first *Transcription*, and the Manner, and Circumstances of its *Conveyance*: And Secondly, from its Present *condition* and *posture*. For the first, When the several Parts of the *New Testament* were first written, so very *many* had imbraced the Doctrine thereof, from the Preaching of *Christ* and the *Apostles*, that it is not to be doubted

doubted but that multitudes of *Copies* were *immediately* taken, and diſperſed into all parts of *Europe*, into *Aſia*, and *Egypt*, and whereſoever the *Chriſtian Religion* was by any received; Nor can we ſuppoſe that men that *ſuffered* daily for a *Religion*, the loſs of their *lives* and *eſtates*, would not be careful Exactly to know the *Doctrine* of it, and to be ſafely poſſeſſed of that great *Rule* by which they were to be in all things *Directed*, when 'twas ſo eaſily to be had. Nay, 'tis probable that the *Apoſtles* themſelves might diſperſe ſeveral *Tranſcripts* of their own *Writings* amongſt the *Chriſtians*, & ſo innumerable *Copies* might be taken from many *Originals*. But however, Certain it is, that the *Autographa's* of the *Apoſtles*, the very *Originals* of the *New Teſtament* themſelves, were very *long Preſerved* as moſt *precious Jewels* in the *Church*. *Tertullian* ſayes, ſome of them were extant in his time; and we are told by ſome *Authors* of Credit, that *S. Johns Goſpel* Written with his own Hand, was preſerved by the *Church* of *Epheſus* till the time of *Honorius* the *Emperour*. Now let any reaſonable man judge what a vaſt number of *Copies* were likely to be taken before the *Originals* periſhed? and how highly improbable, if not morally Impoſſible, it was, to impoſe a publick and general *abuſe* upon the world by

a *false Transcription* of such *Writings*! while the *Originals* themselves lasted it could not be done. Nor can we conceive the *Christian Church* so intollerable *Sottish*, and so *universally Negligent*, as to take up with *false Transcripts*, while the *Originals* were to be had to *compare* them withal, and *correct* them by. And before the *Originals* themselves perished, such a vast multitude of True *Copies*, generally known from the *Originals* so to be, must needs be extant, and we are historically assured actually were so: that the *Scriptures* were for ever thereby secured against any attempts that could possibly be made that way.

Secondly, If we consider how much this *Book* upon its first publication filled the world with *Discourse*! what various *Disputes* there arose relating to all Parts of it, wherein an *Appeal* on all sides was still made to the *Letter* of the *Text* and the *Book* it *self*! how throughly all Passages in it were *Discussed* and *Examined* both by *Jews*, *Christians*, and *Heathens*, urged and made use of in the *warmest controversies* (in the pursuit of which, by men of different Perswasions, the *mis-reciting*, or *corrupting* a *Text* would soon have been openly *published*) If we consider by how many *Authors* in those times it was *quoted*; and that it was then the continual and general *Study* of the

the *Christian-parts* of the world, and the constant and daily Work and Imployment of many amongst them to Preach and instruct the People out of it; all this Considered, it is most absurd to imagine that the least considerable Alteration could ever be made in such a *Book*, without some notorious and universal *discovery*: Nor could it ever possibly happen, unless we'l suppose that all men, in some *One Age*, of *all Opinions*, that were possessed of the *Bible*, should *at once agree* together to *deface* their *Grand Charter*, their *Magna Charta* by which they held *all*, to *corrupt* that *Sacred Depositum* on which they wholly relyed for their present and eternal *welfare*, to no other end, but their *own* utmost *ruine*, and to *abuse all succeeding Generations*.

Secondly, If we consider the *New Testament* it self as *we now find it*. First, 'tis in the Bulk of it so *composed*, as does much secure us (especially in all *material* things) against all danger this way. Either it must have been *Generally* attempted, or in some *Particulars*. To imagine any *General* attempt should that way be made, is ridiculous; nor do we hear one word that there was ever a *Thought* to endeavour any such thing. And to effect an Alteration about any *One Particular point*, is a thing could not easily be done; because no little alteration would do it. No considerable Truths could

could be Inverted without *many* alterations made: because they are all generally grounded upon very *many Texts*, witnessed unto from several *places*; and indeed all the Eminent Truths of the *New Testament* are so *interwoven* together, and have such a *Dependency* each upon other, that it would be found a very hard Task to Deface the beauty of any *One*, without giving a considerable Wound to the *whole*; Nor in truth do we find any one Part of the *New Testament* that looks like a *Patch* set upon the rest, nor any one Doctrine that savours in the least, of any such *Sophistication*. This *Book* does not appear to be partly from *God* and partly from *Men*, but there is *One Divine Spirit* breathed visibly through the *whole*. 'Tis *all* of a *Piece*. Nor could any wicked design to Corrupt any one *Part* of it have taken effect, but in all probability the rest would some way or other have made an opon *Discovery* of it.

Thirdly; The *various Readings* we meet with in several *copies* of the *New Testament*, are in themselves, if duely considered, a great evidence that the *Originals* have not been *corrupted*; for such *various readings* of any place cannot be reasonably thought to arise from any *design* to *vitiate* and *falsify* the *Text*; because such various Readings do rather accidentally

dentally tend to *discover* any thing of that nature, and *secure* against any *Total* and *General alteration*; and amongst them all to contain and preserve the Integrity and native Sense of the *Text*, and enable a diligent *Reader*, by a through Search and Examination of them to find it out. Nor do we ever suppose that any Book that has passed through many hands and been often Transcribed, to be *totally* Corrupted or Changed, because in some places of it we find *various Lections*, but are thereby much secured that such Books have not been Designedly Altered; And with good reason do judge that such various Lections are barely the effects of *casual mistakes*, and that the Original Sense of the Authour is still preserved, and may, by a careful and diligent inspection be found out amongst them. And indeed, those we find of some Texts in the *New Testament*, are of such a nature, that they all evidently appear the effects of humane *frailty*, and onely such variations, as might (considering how vast a number of Copies were at first taken) escape the *best Scribes*, and the greatest *diligence*. Nor is there the least appearance of any Design or Contrivance to *Vitiate the Original Text*, or any thing to be found that in the least degree looks that way in all those Various Readings that we find amongst

amongst such *Copies*, as have been most *anciently*, most *generally*, and most *publickly* used in the *Church*, by which we are to take our *Measure* in this matter. 'Tis in this case, of great Consideration, That no Particular designs of any bad men have been *gratified*, nor any corrupt Ends *attained*; nor indeed any Distinct Ends at all, of any sort, by any such *diversity* of *readings*: which sufficiently shews they came not originally from *Contrivement*, nor were *Intended* as the Foundation of any particular *Notions*, but are the bare and single effects of *Accident*. That the *New Testament* therefore has been in any Part of it, wholly *changed* and *corrupted*, there appeareth neither Certain nor Probable ground to believe. Nor indeed is there any good ground to believe that these *Sacred Records* have suffered the least *violation* in this kind. First, no man can prove that the *Scriptures* were ever *Corrupted*, nor tell us by *whom*, or *When*, or the manner *How*! which yet ought to be done, if men will Reasonably Object in this case; For no such Presumption as this (that renders God in his Providence so Regardless of his Word, and his *Church*, and so Reproches the *Christian Profession* that has been in such a Succession Established upon the Authority of this Book) ought ever to be admitted without very positive *Proof*:

Especially

Especially when we have such apparent Reasons to believe the contrary. By Whom is it, I ask, that the *Bible* could be *corrupted*? It must have been either by *Jews*, *Pagans*, or *Hereticks*. 'Tis plain the *Jews* have not done it; for we find multitudes of Texts that give in a daily witness against them, which doubtless had they attempted the *Bible* in such a way, they would never have suffered so to remain upon Record against them. No part of the *Pagan* World can be reasonably thought to have done it: for the Scriptures contain such an eminent Revelation of the *One true God* and his *worship*, as puts an end to *all Heathenish vanities*, and at once dispatches all *False gods* out of the world. Nor have *Hereticks* done it; for 'tis this *Sword of the Spirit*, the Written *Word of God*, that upon all occasions mortally wounds them: the *Scriptures* have slain their thousands and their ten thousands in this kind. 'Tis the *purity* of the *Scriptures* in asserting the Orthodox Truths of Religion, that has in all Ages kept up the *Christian Verity*, and still brought all sorts of *Hereticks* to an open shame. It has been the *wresting* or *perverting*, not the *Corrupting* of *Scripture*, from whence all *Heresies* have chiefly risen; and the native and genuine *Sense* of the *Bible* has still proved their Ruine. Nor

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is there upon the whole of this matter, any to-lerable Reason to Doubt but that as God was pleased by his special Providence to Secure the *Old Testament* (which we are sure he did) and preserve it intire till the time of our *Saviour*, so by the same Providence he has se-cured the *Old* and the *New* since, and deliver-red them over to the *Church* in these latter Ages without any considerable *variation* from what they were when they were first written. And this ought to be duely considered, as an eminent help towards a rational Satisfaction in this point, That the very same *Objection* which some men now please themselves with against the *New Testament*, the *Old Testament* was equally lyable to, in the times of our *Saviour* and the *Apostles*. For after *Esdras*'s time, the *Old Testament* came into no *Infallible hands* till the times of the *Gospel*, was convey-ed by *fallible means* through many Ages down to those times, had the same possibilities of *Alteration* then, that the *New Testament* has now; Various *Lections* also in the *Hebrew co-pies* were then extant: And yet for all this, the *Scriptures* of the *Old Testament* were then *pure* and *intire*: Nor does our *Saviour* or the *Apostles* mention the least *defect* that was then in them: Nor was there in those eminent times of Reformation, the least Questi-

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on no doubt ever raised upon any such account.

One grand *Objection* is usually made upon the whole of this matter, and 'tis thus framed. All these Arguments brought either to prove the *Bible* in general, or to answer such particular doubts as arise about it, are built (say some) upon no better foundation than *Humane*, and in themselves *fallible* grounds: And if so, we still embrace our *Religion*, but upon uncertain terms; can never from thence arrive at any positive and absolute assurance, nor come to such a *Divine* and *Infallible faith* as we ought to have in this case.

In answering to this Objection, this must be acknowledged, that although the *Scriptures* of the *Old* and *New Testament* were actuated by the *infallible* guidance of the *Holy Ghost*, yet the manner of their *Conveyance* to future Ages has been by *Humane*, and in themselves *fallible* means. The Grounds and Reasons of which disposal of God, though we cannot pretend fully to reach, yet we are thus far informed; First, the *Scriptures* could not have been by means in themselves absolutely *infallible*, handed down to all Places and Ages, without the visible continuance and constant exertion of such a *supernatural* and *extraordinary Power* as would have wholly inverted that

course we find God most generally taken in his Rule and disposal of the World. Secondly, it would have prevented all that care and industry God intended to exercise his Church withall to their great advantage) in the exact preservation of these sacred *Records*. Thirdly, there had been no room for a belief of, nor occasion for a dependance upon that Wisdom and Power God has expressed, and wherein he has greatly honoured himself, in an overruling disposal of *ordinary means* to such *extraordinary Ends*, who has providentially secured this Book through all the several Channels of *Humane* conveyance.

This Objection is much urged; First, by those of the *Roman Church* on the one hand, to convince us of the great uncertainty of our own profession, and the stability of theirs. And Secondly, by men of *Sceptical* Principles on the other hand, either to fright or perswade us, or both, out of all *Religion*, by telling us, There is no positive or absolute *certainty* in the grounds of *any*. How serviceable this Objection (though it has filled the World with great noise and clamour, as it has been pressed both ways) will prove to either of these designs, and indeed with how great absurdity 'tis managed in order to both, will be soon made to appear.

All

All belief of things *Divine* in an ordinary way (I speak not of such Divine illumination, as God may particularly vouchsafe to any) must of necessity be ultimately resolved into that we call *Rational* and *Moral assurance*; for when we speak most properly of *Divine faith*, we mean such a faith as is built upon a *Divine Testimony*, not denominating it from the *Object* of it, nor from the *Effect* of it (which is less proper) but from the *Foundation* and *Ground* of it. Now *Divine faith*, in that best and truest sense of it, will be reduced into no more then a *Moral assurance* at last; for, if I say my faith is Divine, because built upon a *Divine Testimony*, 'tis in some sense true: But if I am asked, by what means I came to *know* that Testimony to be Divine? That question must needs bring me back to a *Moral assurance* as the ground of all my previous belief about that Divine Testimony it self, that it really is so. Whatsoever *Revelation* God makes of his mind to me, I must needs without Divine assistance receive it upon *Humane*, and in themselves *fallible* terms, and so judge of it as I judg of all other things. No man can receive any Revelation from God, with a faith a Divine and infallible as the Revelation is in it self, unless there be an *equal inspiration* in both cases, and God make men as infallible

in *Judging* of Revelation when propoſed, as he made the Inſtruments of it in the Act of its *Conveyance*. The plain Queſtion, in this Caſe, is how I come to receive all other things into my belief that are Objects of belief? It muſt be confeſſed, upon the grounds of *Rational* credibility and *Moral aſſurance*, and therefore upon the ſame terms muſt I believe all things *Divine* and *Supernatural*, unleſs God give me new *faculties*, or ſome way extraordinarily aſſiſt me, and make me ſomewhat *more* then I *was*. Nor did any man that was not himſelf *Divine* and *Infallible* (as the *Apoſtles* were) and inſpired infallibly to know that he was ſo, ever receive any Revelation upon any higher terms then that we call *Moral* aſſurance, and *Humane* credibility. For firſt, If I receive a Revelation upon Motives *External* and *Foreign* to it ſelf, ſuch Motives are all granted to be in themſelves of a *Humane* and *fallible* Nature. If I receive it upon any Motives *Internal*, any Teſtimony reſulting from ſuch Revelation it ſelf, to juſtifie its own Divinity to me, yet I muſt of neceſſity (without extraordinary inſpiration) judge of ſuch Internal Teſtimony, by *Moral conſiderations*, and from *Humane* and *Rational Argumentation* with my ſelf, come at laſt to make a judgement about it. Thoſe that lived in the firſt times,

times, that saw the Miracles, and heard the Doctrine delivered from the mouths of the *Apostles* themselves, were yet (without inspiration) but upon *Humane* and *fallible* terms of *judging* and *believing*; because those *Mediums* by which they did judge and believe, were in their own Nature so; for, 'tis not a thing in it self infallibly certain, but that any man may be mistaken in the judgement he makes of a *Miracle*, or in that faith whereby he embraces any Doctrine as *Divine*.

First, This Objection, as 'tis urged by those of the *Roman Church*, does not disturb us at all. Indeed, returns directly upon themselves, nor does the remedy they provide, any way cure that inconveniency which they suppose will otherwise accrue to Religion by it; They tell us, God has placed an *unerring Judgement*, a *faculty* of making an *infallible determination* in the *Church*, and from thence this Objection is Answered, by that means we are perfectly at an end of all doubts about this matter; for, if the *Church*, that is in it self *Infallible*, tells us, that this is the word of God, and as it was at first delivered, we come upon that account to a *Divine* and *Infallible faith*, as built upon a Divine and Infallible Testimony, and are infallibly assured about it. But this kind of reasoning brings us but just where we were, and

is indeed in it self but a very mean sort of trifling; for, 'tis to erect *another infallibility*, to be assured of which there is ten times greater difficulty then in the former case. The *Scriptures* (we say) are in themselves *Divine* and *Infallible*, as coming from God; The Question is, about our *way* of coming to *know* this, that they are so. 'Tis confessed by us, it must be without inspiration by means in themselves *Humane* and *Fallible*, and from thence results the strength of this Objection: That supposing the *Scriptures* to be in themselves *Divine*, yet we coming in a *Humane way* to the *Knowledge* that they are so, and to solve all Objections against them, our belief of them is still resolved into no more then that we call a *Humane* and *Rational credibility*. And do we not come to the very *same* point in the *other case?* The *Church* (say they) is *Divinely inspired*; but how came I to *know* it? To say, by the *Scriptures*, is in this case ridiculous; If upon *Providential* and *Probable* Motives (as themselves do acknowledge) we are thereby pitched upon a *fallible bottom* still; are we not upon the same Humane and Fallible means of judging; 'Tis not enough in this case to make the *Pope* or any else *Infallible*; but before we can that *way* perfectly enervate this Objection, we must make *every man* infallibly to *know* that they are so

so infallible. Can any man more infallibly judge of the *Churches infallibility* then of the *Bibles*? Are there not as many, nay more questions that must necessarily be determined by Fallibly and Humanely judging in the *one Case* then in the *other*? as first whether there actually be any such thing as an infallible Church extant or no; Secondly, if there be, what Church it is that is so; and Thirdly, whether that Church be universally infallible, or only in some things, and under what sort of constitution it must be, when it so infallibly acts; so that, admit the *Churches infallibility* in it self, yet 'tis utterly impossible that a man should believe any thing upon its infallible determination, with any other then a *Humane* and *Fallible Faith*; because 'tis upon Humane and Fallible *Motives* upon which men primarily and previously come to an assurance of such *infallibility*. And therefore, whatsoever faith in the *Roman Church* is grounded upon the *Churches infallible Judgement*, it must unavoidably be ultimately resolved into such Grounds as are in themselves of a Humane and fallible Nature. So that the *Roman infallibility*, as 'tis in it self an absurd and fictitious pretension, so were it admitted, 'tis to no purpose at all for that end for which 'tis intended, so far as 'tis urged in this matter.

Secondly, a rational Belief of the *Bible*, and a rational Satisfaction about it, founded in a Moral assurance, is all we *can have*, and all that in this case we ought to *expect*. I demand of all such Objectors, by what means they come to any Assurance in *any Point of Religion*! To one of these three things they will be unavoidably forced: Either to deny that there is *any certainty* at all in Religion, and thereby to subvert *all Religion*: To pretend to extraordinary *Inspiration*; or else to acknowledge they come to it in a *Moral way*. And indeed the founding our belief of Revelation upon *Moral* and *Rational Assurance*, is so far from subverting the *certainty* of our Religion, that the grand Fundamentals of *all Religion* must of necessity be originally established upon that Bottom; and can be upon no other; for we come to an Assurance of the *Being* of *God*, and the future state of mens *Souls*, upon no other Grounds then *Moral* and *Rational conclusions*, from whence there can possibly result no more then a *Moral Assurance*. Whoever attemps a Rational proof of the Being of God, is obliged to disclaim all pretence to *Infallibility*, in the *way* of his *proof*; because *Infallibility* is wholly relative to *God himself*: The notion of it cannot exist without the admission of such a *Being*; and therefore

therefore to talk of an *Infallible* way of proving his Being, would be grosly absurd; for 'twere openly to *beg* the *Question*, and take that for *granted* which we oblige our selves to *prove*. So that whoever upon rational terms and the grounds of Moral Assurance, believe the *Bible* to be sent us from *God*, believes it upon the same Grounds upon which he must necessarily believe the first Principles of all Religion, and believe it upon the *highest terms* God either requires or enables him without Inspiration to believe it; upon such as ought sufficiently to fix him in his *belief*, and upon such as if duely pursued, will certainly produce all those excellent ends God intends by this *Book*.

This may serve, in some measure, to manifest the *vanity* of all pretensions to an *Infallible belief* (without a Divine and Infalible assistance) of *revealed* and *supernatural* Truths, and the Mistakes of such, who suppose we can never be settled in any Points of Religion without it: And may sufficiently justify an indeavour to make a *Rational proof* of the *Scriptures*, without a pretence to any such *Divine* and *Infallible* Judgment about them. If so much be urged for the Proof of the *Bible* in general, and in Answer to particular Doubts relating to the manner of its *conveyance*, as will

will amount to a *rational assurance* and *satisfaction*: 'Tis all we can have without *Inspiration*, and all we ought to *Expect* in this case. All we pretend to from attempts of this nature, is but a *Moral assurance* that this Book was at first written by *Gods direction*, and that those *Copies* we now have of it, are without any *designed corruption*, or other *variation* from the first *Originals* (then what humane frailty in the Transcribing of them has occasioned) descended down to us: and that in all such places where we find various *readings*, the true *Sense* of the place, and the original *Dictates* of the *Holy Ghost*, are amongst *them all* safely *preserved*, and by a diligent search may be *discovered*.

And upon the same Grounds of *Moral Assurance* are men in point of *Translations*, and all such who are Illiterate. For, as we can be without extraordinary assistance but Morally certain that the *Bible* was Originally Written by a *divine direction*, and that those *Copies* we now have of it in the *Original Languages*, were at first Rightly *transcribed*, and have not been since *corrupted* or *changed*, so men may be also Morally Certain about a *Translation*. For 'tis in it self a thing very possible to be, that the *Scriptures* may, out of their own Languages, be truely and rightly *translated*

stated (and being so, are of the same *Divine Authority* that they were before) and upon circumstantial considerations men may come rationally and safely to conclude that they are so. And indeed, unless all men in an Age that understand the *Original tongues*, should *agree*, (which is absurd to conceive, and morally impossible to be) to *deceive* and *abuse* those that do not; no Designed abuse nor any palpable falshood can be imposed upon men that way. And in like manner, persons *Illiterate* may be Morally Certain that they are no way deceived, when the *Scriptures* are *Preached* or *Read* to them. The Ground of Assurance in all these cases is still the same; the Difference is only Gradual. Those who understand the *Original Languages* are upon *easier* and *nearer* terms of Moral Assurance about them, but in the other cases it may be also attained. And in all cases, God has providentially afforded means sufficient to secure any reasonable man about the *Truth* and *Authority* of his *Word*.

Fourthly, *How can we believe this* Book (say some) *to be from* God, *when we find contained in it divers* Contradictions? *Several strange and* Incredible Stories? *and other things greatly liable to* Exception? This

This *Objection*, though it looks with the most Threatning aspect, has yet the least prevailing Influence; is of all others the most Impotent, has the least rational Vigour; and when duely examined, will prove least effectual to those bad Ends for which it is by any intended. When men tell us in general of Contradictions they find in the *Bible*, but come to no Distinct and positive Proof, they do not in that case *Object*, but *Revile*. He that will give an Edge to such kind of Discourse must punctually Instance *Wherein* this *book* has asserted any *One* such thing as implies a direct *Contradiction*, and is in its own Nature utterly *Impossible* to be; or where any two things are affirmed and denyed so directly *contrary* to each other, that they are wholly uncapable of any *Reconciliation*. This task, with some degree of Contempt, we impose upon all *Antiscriptural* men: And are very secure that all those *seeming Contradictions* that are to be found in the *Bible*, do at last prove an eminent Testimony to its *Divinity*. For first, they are in their *appearance* so to be, a great Instance that in the Writing of this *Book*, there was no corrupt *Design* to *Cajole* or engage the opinions of men to it. And Secondly, upon a thorough Search, & due there appears in them all, such a deep, unthought of,

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and admirable *Concord* (without the least shew of any Designed Agreement) and such a unanimous tendency towards the great End of the whole, as greatly favours of *Divine Counsel*, and such a Contrivance, as we may reasonably expect to come from *above*.

In the management of these kind of Weapons against the *Bible*, we find none that have been at any time since, more dexterous, then heretofore were *Celsus*, *Julian*, *Porphiry*, and *Faustus* the *Manichee*. How mean their attempts were, and how little Impression they made, will appear by the Instance of some of their chiefest *Objections* in this kind. First they *Object* against the *Bible*, because we are told therein of divers *Incredible things*: As that a *Serpent* should *speak* to *Eve*; an *Ass reprove* his *Master*; that the *Sun* should *stand still*, and a *Woman* be turned into *Salt*, with many other things of the like nature. That the *Devil* should *speak* in a *Serpent*, or that *God* should *open the mouth of an Ass*, can seem Impossible, and so incredible to *none* that acknowledge such *Superiour* and *Invisible Powers*; especially 'twas absurd in *Celsus*, and *Julian*, and others of the *Heathens* so to Object; because nothing was more commonly believed amongst them then Stories of this nature,

nature; and 'tis well known the *Devil spake* daily to them through *Images*. *Philostratus* gives a large account how an *Elm-tree spake to Apollonius*; *Porphyrie* tells us that a *River saluted Pythagoras*; & *Julian* himself and his *Philosopher Maximus* had oft heard the *Devil speak* with divers kinds of *voices*: and therefore no such things could seem Impossible to them. Nay, *Julian* acknowledged a Possibility of the highest point in the *Bible*, which is the *Incarnation* of the *Deity*; and himself gave an instance of it in *Esculapius*, whom he supposed to descend from Heaven and assume *Humane Nature*, that he might instruct the World in the art of *Physick*. 'Tis in truth, in it self, a thing Childish and absurd, to Object against the *Bible* for the relation of any such passages, if the Being of God be once acknowledged. 'Tis true that no *humane power* can make the *Sun* stand still, turn a *Woman* to *Salt*, or effect any thing of such a nature; and should the Scriptures ascribe any such things to any *Humane Ability*, the *Objection* were well grounded: but they are things possible, and easy with God to effect: and the fact of them, when ascribed to Him, of an easie belief; Nor can any man reasonably Object against the *Scriptures* upon any such account, that does not first deny the Actual Existence of God. *Secondly*

Secondly, They tell us, there are some things contained in the Scriptures and ascribed to God, that are altogether *unworthy* of him, and no way fit to proceed from him; and they Instance chiefly in two: The *Command* given to *Abraham to slay his Son*; and the *Command* given to the *Prophet Hosea*, *to Marry a Wife of Whoredoms, and an Adulteress*; The first is soon Answered: For it appears to be a *Command* (which might very properly result from the *Soveraignty* of *God*) onely for the *Trial* and Exercise of *Abrahams obedience*; and 'tis evident, God never intended any such thing should be effected, for he himself after forbad it. For the Second, 'Tis very plain to be onely a Transaction in a *Vision*, to set forth the *corrupt* and *Idolatrous state* of the ten *Tribes* at that time, and nothing that was then really *acted* by the *Prophet* himself in person; and 'tis usual in the *Scriptures* to have things *historically* related, that were onely in *Visions transacted*. So the *Prophet Jeremy*, when he was besieged in *Jerusalem*, is said to be Commanded to go to *Euphrates* a River in *Babylon*, and hide his *Girdle* in the hole of a *Rock* there; 'Twas not possible for *Jeremy* at that time to go thither, and 'tis very evident, he did not, neither then nor at any time after: And yet 'tis Historically set down though it

was a thing only done in a way of *Vision*. So *Ezekiel*, when he was a *Captive* in *Babylon*, seems to be brought to *Jerusalem*, and is bid to dig *a hole in a Wall there*, and to see the *wicked abominations of the Ancients of* Israel; and yet 'tis certain, *Ezekiel* was then personally in *Babylon*, and that whole business was only done in a *Vision*: And so he himself affirms in the 8th *Chapter of his Prophecy*. So the *Prophet Isaiah's* going *naked twenty days*, and *Ezekiels lying three hundred and ninety dayes* on the one side, were things only acted in a way of *Vision*.

Thirdly, They tell us of some passages in the *Evangelists* that can by no means be *reconciled* together. The most considerable of which are these two; First, In *St. Marks Gospel*, where the time of our *Saviours* death is set down, we are told, *That it was the third hour, and they crucified him*. And in *St. Johns Gospel* and *St. Lukes*, we are told *It was about the sixth hour*. Both which are easily reconciled, by a right understanding of the *Jewish Custom* of accounting a *Day*. 'Tis well known, the *Jews* divided each day into *four distinct parts*, which were their several hours of publick *Prayer*, and going up to the Temple; the *third hour*, the *sixth hour*, the *ninth hour*, and the *twelfth hour*. When any one of these *hours* came

came, all the ſpace between that and the other (which was *three hours*) was denominated from that *firſt hour*. As when the *third hour* came, all the whole *three hours* between that and the *ſixth hour*, was called the *third hour*: So that the time of our *Saviours Crucifixion*, being near unto mid-day, or our *Twelve a Clock* but ſome little before it, which was the time they called the *Sixth hour*. *St. Mark* ſayes he was Crucified the *third hour*; becauſe all the time between the *third hour* and the *ſixth* was ſtrictly ſo called, and yet in regard it was very *near* the *ſixth hour*, both *St. John* and *St. Luke* ſay he was *Crucified about the ſixth hour*; that is, 'Twas very *near* to *Twelve a Clock* at the time of his *Crucifixion*. And ſo there appears not the leaſt ſubſtantial difference between them in this matter. Secondly, In the natural *Genealogy* of our *Saviour*, as 'tis ſet down by *St. Matthew* and *St. Luke*, they ſay, There is great diſagrement, and ſuch differences as are not to be reconciled. That there are conſiderable differences we confeſs, and that they are not, without ſome difficulty, to be reconciled, we alſo acknowledge. Firſt, That there ſhould be differences between the *Evangeliſts* in their accounting of this *Genealogy*, is not hard to conceive: If we conſider theſe four things. Firſt, That one *Evangeliſt*

begins at the *top*, and traces our *Saviours Pedigree downward*, The other begins at the *bottom*, and ascends *upward*. Secondly, One carries up the *Genealogy* of our *Saviour* as far as *Adam*, in whom all Mankind were equally existing: The other derives him no higher then from the Stock of *Abraham*, to whom the *Promises* were more peculiarly made. Thirdly, One seems to rehearse chiefly the *Legal* descent of our *Saviour*, the other confines himself more to his *Natural*. Fourthly, One obligeth himself in his account to the number of *three fourteens*, and permits himself for that Reason to leave some out, the other without any such confinement, makes his account more at large. And throughout the whole, they both sometimes intend the same *Persons* under different *Names*. These things have occasioned visible differences and variations in the manner of setting down this *Genealogy*: Nor can it be otherwise, but that these differences are such as that they are in themselves *irreconcileable*, there is not the least ground to suppose. Nay, 'tis very reasonable to believe from the Nature of them, and from those different Methods we see the *Evangelists* have chosen, that there is a most admirable *Concord* between them, and that this *Genealogy* is after a *various manner* purposely set

ſet down, to Anſwer divers Objections that might then be made amongſt the *Jews* in thoſe times: And by that *diverſity* we find in it, is accommodated by the *Holy Ghoſt* to many great and excellent *Ends*. Secondly, That there ſhould be *difficulty* to reconcile the *Evangeliſts* in this matter, and fully to find out that excellent *Harmony* that we have cauſe to believe there is in the Methods of both, cannot be thought ſtrange, if we conſider theſe two things, Firſt, The *Cuſtoms* of the *Jews* (to which theſe Genealogies refer) in reckoning their Genealogies; amongſt them it is ordinary to find *differing Pedigrees*, which ſeem much to *contradict* each other, when they really do not, and great differences were often occaſioned thereby; and this is very eaſie to conceive; becauſe the *Jews* had many particularites to themſelves and their own Nation in point of *Relation*, which other Countries were not acquainted withall; men of the ſame *Tribe* were upon a *Political* account *Brethren*, as well as thoſe that were *naturally* ſo, and were equally ſo ſtiled; If a man dyed *Childleſs*, amongſt them, and the next of Kin Marryed his Widdow, and had Children by her, thoſe *Children* are reckoned from *two Fathers*. Legally they were the Children of the *firſt* Husband, and *Naturally* of the *Second*. *Succeſſors* and *Provi-*

dential Inheritors, both in *Imployments* and *Estates*, are often reckoned as the *begotten* and *natural Children* of their *Predecessors*; and so in divers other particular cases, and in all their Genealogies, they generally reckoned their *descents* by a *civil* and *Legal* as well as a *Natural Line*. Secondly, We now want the advantage of many *Genealogies* and *Pedigrees* extant amongst the *Jews* in our *Saviours* time, to which, without doubt, the *Evangelists* much refer in the courses of their account, and by which (were we possessed of them) they would much more easily have been reconciled and understood. The *Jews* were very *curious* and *exact* in the preservation of things of that Nature, and good Reason they had so to be; for amongst the *Heathens* want of *Posterity* might be supplied by *Adoption*; but the *Jews* were obliged to a strict succession in *Alliance* and *Kindred*. The whole of this matter is most judiciously discoursed of by the learned *Grotius* in his *Annotations* upon these two *Evangelists*, to which (the exact disquisition of all the particulars being too large a task for this undertaking) I fear not to refer any impartial Reader, for a sufficient Answer to all that can be reasonably objected against the *Bible* from hence; there being nothing contained in either of these two Genealogies (that of St. *Matthew*

and

and that of St. *Luke*) that in the leaſt implies any direct contradiction, nor is there any ſuch difference between them, or between them and any other part of the *Bible* (one of which muſt be punctually made good, or elſe this Objection is of no force) as appears wholly uncapable of any Reconciliation. But on the contrary, 'Tis evident the *Evangeliſts* do after an admirable manner conſiſt and agree with themſelves, Although in order to many excellent ends, and to clear us all Doubts about our *Saviours deſcent*, they *differently* account: Which, upon the forementioned Grounds, can ſeem hard to none to conceive.

Fourthly, They tell us There is much contained in the *Bible*, that ſeems of too *Mean* and *Low* a nature to come from ſuch a *wiſe* and *Excellent Being* as *God*, and by no means *fit* to be Aſcribed to *Him*. Such are many *Stories*, and many *Similitudes*, and divers *Expreſſions* we find there. On the one hand, they reproch this *Book* for containing things too *High* to be *Credited*: And on the other hand, they object againſt it, as containing many things too *Mean* to be *Regarded*; In the one, they impeach Gods *Power*, and imply, ſome things are too *Great* for him to *Effect*: And by the other, caſt a contempt upon the higheſt ef-

fects of his *Condescention* and *Goodness* (for nothing can more Savour of it then such a familiar way of conversing with Men) 'Tis true that the *Scriptures* have, by divers *Similitudes*, *Resemblances*, and *Allegories*, made the whole World and all we converse with, some way or other *Hieroglyphical* to us of *Divinity*: Have expressed somewhat of *Religion* to us, by all Parts of the *Creation*, and by the most common *employments* of Humane life: Then which, nothing could make *Religion* look with a more *Familiar* aspect upon us, nor render the *Mysteries* of it more *easy* to be *embraced* by all *capacities*. Nor is any thing more likely to preserve the *memory* of things *Supernatural* and *Divine*, in the minds of men, then when they are expressed to them by such things with which they are sure to have a constant *converse* while they stay in this World. Whatsoever we find in the *Bible* of this Kind, stands sufficiently discharged from all Reasonable exception, because 'tis visibly but *adjusting* the Notions of *Religion* to the *impotency* of many *capacities*. And of the *meanest expressions*, either in *Similitudes*, *Allegories*, *Metaphors*, or otherwise, that we find in the *Scriptures*, These two things must be acknowledged (by which they are enough secured against all just and rational Contempt) First,

That

That they are such, as in their own nature, are *proper* and *apt* to *inform* us in all those Cases in which they are made use of. And Secondly, They all appear to have a direct tendency to instruct men in the *Noblest* and *Sublimest* Truths, And are evidently Conducing to the *Highest* and most *Excellent Attainments* that Mankind are Capable of.

These, and such like Objections have often faced the *Bible*; But have given very little *stop* to its *Progress*. Indeed, all occasions given, though by its worst Enemies, for the *Discussion* of it, have turn'd greatly to its *Advantage*, and still made it appear less capable of any *Just* and *Solid Exception*. The *Bible* is a Book that will *endure Discourse*. The *Deeper* we search into all parts of it, still the surer we are to find a *Divine bottome*. 'Tis true that the *manner* of its *composure* is suitable to its *nature*, and *end*: Savours altogether of the *wisdome* of *another world*: 'Tis evidently design'd to *subvert* all *corrupt Interests*, and *debase* mens *proud* opinions of their own *knowledge*: 'Tis writ after a *sort* that seems *peculiar* to *God*, and in no such *way* as Mankind use to *treat* one with another; And therefore, 'tis no wonder if *Some men* both *Object* against it and *Reproch* it. Divers things there are which in the Reading of this *Book*, we are ra-

tionally

tionally obliged to *Consider*, and by the due consideration whereof, the Grounds of most mens exceptions would be removed. First, the Scriptures appear to be Designed as a General *Store-house* of *Instruction* and *Satisfaction* to all sorts of *Capacities* and *Conditions* to the end of the world; And therefore it can be no very easie task, upon good Grounds, to condemn any Part, either as *Useless* or *Improper*. Secondly, Many passages in the *Scripture* relate to things *past*, and long since transacted, of the *circumstances* of which we are not fully informed; And many passages were accomodated to things then well known, which we in these After-ages are ignorant of. Others relate much to things *future* and to *come*: The Wisdome and Excellency of which will not so fully appear till *Hereafter*. And so we see it was in the *Old Testament*: The use and Reason of many things then, could not be so fully discern'd till explain'd and interpreted by the *Gospel*. The Book of *Ruth* might then happly have been judged by some, as an Impertinent Addition to the rest of the *Bible*, But since the writing of the *New* we see what an excellent use there was of it, to make good our *Saviours natural descent in the flesh* according to the promise. He that saw no more then the *Old Testament* might have thought

that

that Historical discourse of *Melchisedec* that we find in *Moses* to be very defective, mentioning so considerable a Transaction of so Great a Man, in those early times of the world, without giving any further account of him; But now under the *New*, we are informed how Eminent a Projection of *Divine Wisdome* was wrapt up in the seeming Imperfection of that Story, and that the *Eternal Generation* of our *Saviour* in his *Divinity*, in a strange and unthought off way, was Represented and Figured thereby. Thirdly, Many parts of the *Bible* relate to the *Customes* and *Laws* of particular *Places* and *Countreys*: Without the knowledg of which, No man can be a Competent Judge of them. In the Books of *Esther*, *Ezra*, and *Nehemiah*, many things relate to the *Customes* and *Laws* of the *Persians*. In the *Prophets*, divers things are not to be understood without a reference to the Histories of several *Countries* to which they Relate. In the *New Testament*, many passages refer to the Laws and Customes of the *Romanes*: And both in the *Old* and *New Testament*, many places are never to be well understood, without a very exact and distinct knowledg of several Customs and Practices extant in those times amongst the *Jews*; This may be seen in this one instance; Our *Saviour* says,

He

He that will receive Him and embrace the Gospel *must forsake father, and mother, houses and lands, wife, and children, and all he possesseth in this world.* These passages of our *Saviour*, in themselves seem strange, and are extreamly hard, at the first view, to be digested or understood; But become easily intelligible by a knowledg of the *Jewish customs* at that time; For, 'Twas but the same doctrine applied to himself, that was taught dayly amongst the *Jews*, in admitting their *Proselites*. The *Jews* dealt with all *Strangers* after a Threefold manner: Such as continued in *Gentilisme* and *Heathenish Idolatry*, they permitted not to Inhabit amongst them, nor to have any Place in the Land of *Israel*. Such as Renounced the Gentile Idolatry and Assented to some Fundamentals of the *Jewish religion*, which they called the *Seven precepts of Noah*, These were termed *Proselites of the Gate*, had their liberty quietly to Inhabit amongst them, and came into the *outer court of the Temple*, which they called *Atrium Gentilium*. Such as were *Circumcised* and embraced the whole of the *Jewish Religion*, those they called *Proselites of Justice*, And they were in all things taken as *Natural Jews*. The manner of their *initiation* was to be *Washed* in some great Water up to the *Neck*, and there solemn-

solemnly to Renounce not only their former *Gods* and their former *worship*, but their *Country*, all their *Relations*, and *Kindred* whatever, and so to come out of the Water as *New borne*, and from the time of that *Ceremony*, to *commense Legitimate Jews*. Of these last sort of Profelites, and the manner of their becoming so, we find mention in *Tacitus*, where, speaking of such as went over to the *Jewish Religion*, *Nec quicquam* (says he) *prius imbuuntur, quam contemnere Deos, exuere Patriam, Parentes, Liberos, Fratres vilia habere.* They are taught by their first Admission, to despise (that is, to forsake) their Fathers, and Mothers, Children, and Brethren. And to this Custome our *Saviour* evidently referrs, when he speaks of Mens being *Borne again*, and *forsaking all* to become his *Disciples*. Fourthly, The *Bible* being written at several *Seasons*, and in several distinct *Parts*, Revelation ascending *gradually* to its *Meridian*, 'Tis not Reasonable to ground an exception from any *one part*, without a due consideration of what we now find in the *Whole*. Many things, in the *Infancy* of *Revelation*, were less perfectly made known, some practices Less condemned, then what we now find they are under the *Gospel*. And thus it was in the case of *Marriage*; For although God had virtually determined

mined that whole business by the Manner of his *Creation* at first, That *One man should have but one woman*; And had also, by his Last *Prophet*, given a very Pregnant intimation of his mind in that matter; yet the Doctrine of Marriage was never so fully cleared till the times of the *Gospel*; Our *Saviour* then makes a full and final Determination about it: For he positively declares, That *Whosoever shall put away his wife, except for the cause of fornication, and shall marry another, committeth Adultery*. By which, these two great Points about Marriage, are fully and for ever Determined. First, That *Divorce* is Lawful in no *case* but that of *Fornication*. Our *Saviour* declares that God had established Marriage, by a Law of *Creation*, and *first institution*, upon those Termes. And although the *Mosaical indulgence*, in regard of the present and particular State of the *Jews*, had for some time, interposed, yet he has plainly told us, It should be so *No more*, That Indulgence should be in force no longer, But that the Obligation of *Marriage* should remain as twas from the *Beginning*, That *one* Man and *one Woman* were to become *one Flesh* in that Relation, and upon no termes to be parted, but in case of *Fornication*, which in its own nature contains a virtual Dissolution of that Marriage-union. Secondly,

condly, That *Plurality of Wives* is a thing utterly *Unlawful*, and the Practice of it a great *Evil*; For our *Saviour* affirmes That he that marries another wife upon an *Unlawful divorce* from his *first*, (and much more when there is no divorce) *commits Adultery* in so doing: Which he could not do, but upon this ground, *That the having of more wives then one together, is a thing in it self altogether unlawful.*

FINIS.

THE REASONABLENES OF Scripture-Belief.

A DISCOURSE

Giving some account of those

RATIONAL GROUNDS

upon which the

BIBLE

is received as the

WORD of GOD.

Written by
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LONDON,
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To the Earl of ANGLESEY.

My Lord,

BEſides the common enemies to all theſe Paper-adventures, Thoſe who ſuppoſe they can do much better; and ſuch who are not pleaſed they have not done ſo well: from a twofold ſort of Men I expect a ſevere reflection upon this undertaking; chiefly from thoſe who make it their buſineſs to reject all Religion in groſs as a thing no where Exiſting but in the Minds of ſequacious and fearful Men, and deride all attempts made towards its rational juſtification:

And alſo from them, who ſuppoſe things of this nature, priviledged from all diſpute or debate, things not to be proved but admitted, that all endeavours of this kind, are but an open arraignment of ſuch Fundamentals as ought not to be queſtion'd, a diſſervice done to the cauſe of Religion thereby, and at beſt in themſelves but uſeleſs and impertinent.

The following diſcourſe (My Lord,) as it is in its nature no way condited to the guſt of any ſuch men on either hand; ſo I muſt needs acknowledge my ſelf to be beſt pleaſed with whatever is leaſt ſo: The firſt are an abſurd Generation, that by an empty prophane ſort of diſcourſe, which themſelves call Wit, would fain Hector *us out of the wiſeſt and beſt part of the world, make that the ſcorn of this Age, which hath been the moſt valu'd and moſt reverenc'd in all others; And whenever reduced to any ſober and rational conteſt, have no other relief from*

the

the ſhame of their own folly, then what they find in thoſe naked ſhelters of ignorance and confidence: Irreligion 'tis true in its practice hath been ſtill the companion of every Age, but its open and publick defence ſeems the peculiar of this; 'Tis but of late that men come to defend ill living, and ſecure themſelves againſt their own guilt, by an open defyance to all the great maxims of Piety and Virtue; 'Tis but of late the world hath been told, That the notion of a Spirit implies a contradiction; That the Bible is no where in force as a Law Divine, but where by Laws civil and municipal 'tis made ſo to be; That Religion is nothing elſe but a fear of inviſible powers feign'd in the Mind, and fancyed from tales publickly allowed; *Theſe and moſt of the bad Principles of this Age are of no earlier a date then one very ill Book, are indeed but the ſpawn of the* Leviathan: *The other are a ſort of eaſie and*

credulous men, that derive their Religion no higher then Education & Cuſtom, have taken up their greateſt concerns upon truſt, , and whenſoever encounter'd but by any ſmall artificer in the Scepticks, are ſure to be ſufficiently baffled, Themſelves and Religion expoſed to the utmoſt contempt; And upon all ſuch attack's, they either go off wounded with a ſecret diſlike of their own Profeſſion, or oblige themſelves to a ſtubborn and bruitiſh ſort of drudgery, to believe that for which they find they are able to give no good reaſon: Would ſuch dull men once be at leiſure from doing nothing; would they once be perſuaded to make but a ſalley into the exerciſe of their own Reaſon, 'twere no hard task to convince them, that nothing proves more fatal to the publick good of Religion, then this ſtupid ſort of credulity; 'Tis from hence, and from that weak impotent defenſe of the moſt eminent Truths, that reſults natu-

rally

rally from it, that Mens prophane Triumphs have been chiefly erected; 'Tis from hence that we hear of ſo many, ſo eaſily, and ſo often ſeduced; And 'tis thoſe Ages when Men fell off and retir'd from the rational proof of Religion, and ſunk into implicite Belief, and ignorant Devotion, from whence we may date moſt of the great ills of Idolatry and Superſtition, and from whence all thoſe devout fooleries, which have ſince ſo cumber'd the world, had their chiefeſt and firſt riſe: As the whole of Religion is declared to be a reaſonable Service, and can be no other, ſo all the Principles of it in order to its ſo being, muſt upon rational grounds neceſſarily be eſtabliſh'd, what ever Belief is built upon the credit of any Revelation, ought to be ultimately reſolved into a rational proof of that Revelation as ſuch, and what ever appears to us upon thoſe terms ſo to be, whatever can be

ſufficiently

sufficiently proved to be revealed to us from God, from the Soveraign Power of its Author, puts in but a reasonable claim to our assent, though the matter of it in some things exceed the bounds of a humane capatity; And herein it is the Socinians *(who had they confin'd themselves to a rational proof that all we believe is revealed, had been of very good use to the Church) have greatly miscarryed, and when they would need subject all the matter of Revelation to a rational comprehension, fell much short of that credit ought to be given to all that God reveals, fell foul upon those two Fundamentals of our Religion,* the Union of the two Natures, and that of the Trinity, *and indeed have come much short of that Reverence all Nations have paid to their Gods, who by all their Mysteries still have professed to believe some things upon the score of Divine Credit, which by their own Reason they could not fully comprehend.*

Were

Were not the looſe Principles, My Lord, *of this degenerate Age, about the moſt Eſſential parts of* Religion, *ſomewhat more than a ſufficient* Apology, *for whatever is done this way; yet me thinks we can never inculcate too much, even unto the* beſt *men upon this Subject, and that upon theſe two Grounds*; Firſt, *becauſe 'tis from this Book, we derive all the certain notions we have of another, and a farther World, and the great account of all inviſible things*; *and Secondly becauſe 'tis the higheſt Motive we have to all good living; 'tis from hence, from the authority of this Book, that we are chiefly obliged to all that is holy and good, and engaged againſt all the corrupt practiſes of humane Life, when we conſider with what difficulty we attain in the firſt Caſe to a fixed and unſhaken belief of ſuch things as we do not actually ſee, and how apt we are in the latter to decline from the ſtrict Rules*

of

of a good life, nothing can seem more necessary then a rational insurance about the great Foundation of all Belief and Practice in both.

That with a perfect security to our present and future welfare, we may rely upon this Book, as that great and only Revelation, by which God will inform, rule, and judge the world; I have hereby attempted to make evident, not only from its own excellent nature and composure, and such visible and open effects of a supreme and almighty power as accompanyed its first Publication, and lasted till the Church was so far built, that the Scaffolding might be safely taken down; but also from many other considerations, from whence an abundant testimony to its Divinity will appear to result: And this task if sufficiently perform'd as 'twill give answer to all reasonable doubts, and cast a just contempt upon all prophane reproaches;

ches; ſo it will alſo reflect much upon thoſe,, who though they acknowledge this Book to come from God, yet not acquieſſing ſingly in the conduct thereof, declare it thereby inſufficient to thoſe great ends for which it appears to be intended; and ſuch are thoſe of the Roman Church *on the one hand, and all ſorts of* Enthuſiaſts *on the other, who by a twofold ſuperfœtation, that of endleſs Traditions, and that of new and continued Revelations, have rendred the whole Scriptures, if not uſeleſs, Yet as to their great end and deſign, altogether deficient and imperfect.*

My Lord, *I ſeek not by this Dedication to countenance a defence of the Bible, nor any way to ſecure my ſelf againſt the juſt reproach of an ill performance; the firſt would engage me in an open affront to a* Chriſtian State; *and the other oblige me to be too injurious to You, and that Candor and love to*

Truth

Truth you poſſeſs; 'Tis alone that great Honour, and that entire affection I have for Your Lordſhip, that Intereſts Your Name in this matter, though there is nothing leſs needed by You than diſcourſes of this nature, Yet there is nothing more due from me, then an open and publick profeſſion that my ſelf, and what ever I do, is devoted to Your Service. I know my Lord, *into what hands I commit theſe Papers, when I preſent them to You, that great hazard to which they are expoſed by your firſt view, will ſufficiently inure them to all future dangers; I conſider that Judgement with which they are put to encounter, and want not a due ſenſe what the ſucceſs muſt needs be: I know alſo your remedying kindneſs, and am enough ſecur'd thereby, am in this caſe upon the ſame terms of relief, that he was that diſcourſed before* Cæſar, *who thus addreſs'd to him,* Qui apud te *Cæſar*

audent

audent dicere, magnitudinem tuam ignorant, qui non audent, humanitatem; *My Lord, as You were pleaſed before to allow that Method I uſed in diſcovering the* Unreaſonableneſs of Atheiſm; *So I promiſe my ſelf ſome acceptance in the account I now give You of the* Reaſonableneſs of Scripture Belief, *as I know no better Property can be convey'd to the World, then a Rational Poſſeſſion of God and his Word; So I am alſo much pleaſed that I have ſpent ſome part of my time in doing what You required, To whom I owe all that is due to the moſt Generous, and moſt laſting Friendſhip, and ſhall ever be as much as I can be, which is but what I ought to be,*

My Lord,

Your Lordſhips moſt true Friend,

And

moſt Humble & Faithful Servant,

CHARLES WOLSELEY.

THE REASONABLENESS OF Scripture-Belief.

THat the *being of the Christian Religion* depends much upon the Credit and Authority of that Book we call the *BIBLE*, there needs little to be said to prove it. The instance were as hard to find, as 'tis unreasonable in it self to suppose, that any man should, at the same time, reject the *Bible* as *Fictitious*, and yet embrace the *Christian Religion* as *True*. For it must either be granted there are *No Laws* any where extant that do formally constitute this Religion (which is absurd to suppose of any Religion)

ligion) or they muſt needs be admitted *here*. No man can be a *Jew*, and renounce the *Old Teſtament*, nor he a *Mahumetan* that diſclaims the *Alchoran*. Becauſe, to deny the Authority of thoſe *Books*, is, viſibly to raſe the great foundation of all profeſſion and practice in thoſe two Religions. Although the fact of Chriſts being in the World, and many other things relating to the Chriſtian Religion, be atteſted to by other writings; yet the *Scriptures* are the onely means by which we come to a ſufficient knowledge of a *Religion* eſtabliſhed upon that foundation, and which alone, contain the *Laws* and *Conſtitutions* of ſuch Religion. No conſiderable attempt has been, at any time made, to ſet the Chriſtian Religion upon any other Bottom then the *Bible*, to promulge any other edition of *Chriſtian Laws*, to write any *Counter-Story* of *Chriſt* and the *Apoſtles*; or is there extant in the World any *different* account of their *Doctrines*, from whence might be deduced a *Contrary* or *other* ſyſteme of the *Chriſtian Profeſſion* from what is recorded in this *Book*?

Nor is it reaſonable to believe there can be any foundation lay'd, whereon to erect Chriſtianity, where the *Bible* is excluded. For, whatſoever has otherwiſe then by the

Bible,

Bible, by writing or tradition, deſcended down to the World, touching the Chriſtian Religion, has been either by its Friends, or its Enemies. For the Latter, no mention is made in any Heathen Writer, of any Chriſtian Laws, nor indeed of any conſiderable matter at all relating to the Chriſtian Religion, farther then what we find in the *Bible* it ſelf: And ſo amounts to no more then a Cumulative help to its Credibility. And 'tis evident, thoſe of the Heathen who have, at any time, oppoſed the Chriſtian Profeſſion, and diſputed moſt againſt it, have oppoſed it as contained there. That Book being granted, on all hands, to compriſe its Doctrine, and to be the ſtated rule of that Religion. For the former, whatever has been, by the writings or Traditions of ſuch who embraced the Chriſtian Religion, and gave their Aſſent to it, conveyed down to us, can never induce any other Rule of that Religion then the *Bible*. For, beſides that all ſuch Collateral traditions are, in their own nature, relative to the *Bible*, dependant upon it, and ſuch as muſt neceſſarily ſtand and fall together with it; they have alſo come from the hands of thoſe who have themſelves Univerſally proclaimed the *Bible* in all Ages, to be the great and infallible Rule of the Chriſtian Religion.

So that if Chriſtian-tradition be credited, the Authority of the *Bible* is thereby eſtabliſhed. And if it be diſ-believed in that, there can be then no good reaſon to receive any other matter touching the Chriſtian Religion upon the credit of that conveyance. To retain therefore the name of a Chriſtian, and yet diſown the *Bible*, is to become a perfect *Problem*. No ſuch man can produce any Laws or Rules of his Religion, nor give any account wherein they are contained, or by whom or by what Church (with an excluſion of the *Bible*) they have been at any time Received.

Nor can any man rationally make a Partial rejection of the *Bible*, and retain a Chriſtian Profeſſion from thence, in a Limited ſenſe of his own. For a man to ſay, he receives the *Bible*, as he receives other credible writings, as a book generally True, and written by men that meant honeſtly and well, but believes it not written with an Infallible Spirit, nor to carry a Divine Authority along with it, nor ſubmits to it as ſuch, is to ſay a thing extreamly incongruous to all good ſenſe, and to indulge himſelf in a perfect Abſurdity. For, the *Bible* comes to us with a claim of God's Authority attending it, ſpeaks to us in his Name, is a Book that diſowns all humane con-

contrivement, propoſeth it ſelf as written by Divine Inſpiration, and Immediate Direction from God, admits of no Compoſition for its Reception. In ſuch a caſe, there can be no Middle-way, but either we muſt receive this Book and ſubmit to it as ſuch, or elſe reject it with the juſteſt contempt imaginable. It is in nothing to be credited, if it be not in Truth what it pretends to be. For there cannot be a more vile and pernitious falſhood impoſed upon the world, then to counterfeit a Divine Law, and to pretend that to come from Heaven, and to be ſent us from God, which is nothing but the product of Men. Whoever will admit theſe premiſſes that the Scriptures were not written, in every part of them, by the infallible direction of the Holy Ghoſt, when they themſelves tell us that they were ſo, muſt needs deſcend to this concluſion, that they then contain the moſt impudent falſhood, and were compoſed by the worſt deſigners againſt mankind.

The Chriſtian Religion and the Scriptures being ſo related, and ſtanding in ſo near a conjunction as they do: The being of the one having ſo neceſſary a dependance upon the Truth and Authority of the other, 'Twill be eaſily granted to be the great concern of the Chriſtian Church in all ages to aſſert their Di-

vine Authority, and to justify that Book to be written by men that were indeed θεόπνευστοι Divinely inspired, and to be sent us from God as that supreme Law by which he would inform, Rule, and Judge the World.

He that undertakes this Province, and designs to himself such a service, is obliged, First, To consider with whom he is like to encounter! And to proportion his defence to those various assaults the Scripture are usually exposed to. This being admitted (which it ought to be) that no man can, with any good Reason, close with the Christian Religion, and at the same time Renounce the *Bible*. That Maxime of St. *Austin* being undeniable, that *Contra Scripturas nemo Christianus*. There are but three sorts of men by whom the Scriptures can, at any time, be generally Attack, and from whose principles their sacred Authority can receive an Universal Invasion. First, Such who wholly deny the being of God (and consequently of all Religion, for God and Religion are Relatives) such who wallow in the mire of an Atheistical profession. Secondly, Such who admit the Being of God, and a supreme and first cause, but deny his providence, and believe he is no way concern'd about the World, nor troubles himself to exercise any Rule or Dominion

minion at all over it. Thirdly, Such who admit the Being of God, and the exiſtence of Religion, and providence, but reject the Chriſtian Religion, as not True, and embrace ſome other in oppoſition to it.

Of thoſe firſt-born Monſters of Mankind, that *Anomalous* off-ſpring who deny the Being of God, whoſe principles contain in them the utmoſt dreggs of all humane Apoſtacy, and are of all others, the moſt wild and abſurd, for, as *Cicero* ſayes, *Deos eſſe, ita perſpicuum eſt, ut is qui negat, vix eum ſanæ mentis exiſtimem. The Being of the Gods is ſo evident, that no man can be thought well in his wits that denies it.* A previous conſideration is neceſſary to whatever is ſaid upon this or any other Divine ſubject; and therefore I have already conteſted with ſuch, and diſpatcht all my concernes with them, in order to this matter, and the laſt converſe I mean to have with that evil generation, of whom it may moſt truely be ſaid, They are not only the avowed oppoſers of all Religion, but indeed they are *Hoſtes Humani generis, The common enemies of all mankind:* Who, by denying a Supreme Being above, demoliſh the great ſupport of all well-being here below. Of this belief they were heretofore at *Athens*, in thoſe primitive times of Atheiſm and firſt

dawnings of a speculative Irreligion upon the World; and therefore *Cotta* tells us, in *Cicero*, that when *Protagoras* began his Books with this Introduction to Atheism, *De Diis neque ut sint, neque ut non sint, habeo dicere, Atheniensum jussu Urbe atq; Agro est exterminatus, Libriq; ejus in concione combusti.* And he adds, *Ex quo equidem existimo tardiores ad hanc sententiam profitendam multos esse factos, quippe cum pœnam ne dubitatio quidem effugere potuisset.*

For those secundary Enemies to the *Bible*, and together with that of all Religion, such who admit the Being of God, but deny all Providence, and Divine Rule over the World; such who out of shame, disown the grand principle of Atheism, but yet, by this Method, secure all the effects of it to themselves. Of those a preliminary consideration ought to be had. A previous confutation of such principles, being of absolute necessity to make way for the discourse in hand. For it must needs be a vain and impracticable project to indeavour to prove any Book to be Divine, and a Law given forth from God, if there be no such Law any where in Being; which we are sure there never can be, if God no way concernes himself with what men do, nor exercises any Dominion at all over them?

'Tis

'Tis plain, ſuch principles do, *uno ictu*, diſpatch all Religion out of the World, put a perfect period to all Divinity, and render it a thing very abſurd, to ſubmit either in our belief or practice to any thing as Divine. To this purpoſe *Cicero* concludes in his firſt Book *De nat. Deor. Sin autem Dii* (ſays he) *neque poſſunt nos juvare, nec volunt, nec curant omnino, nec quid agamus animadvertunt, nec eſt quod ab his ad hominum vitam permanare poſsit, Quid eſt quod ullos Diis immortalibus Cultus, Honores, Præces, adhibeamus?* If the Gods be no way concern'd about us, to what end ſhould we worſhip or ſerve them? And *Cotta* in the ſame book tells *Velleius*, That *Epicurus*, by making God careleſs of the affairs of men, *Suſtulerit omnem funditus Religionem*: Has utterly ſubverted all Religion. *Quid eſt enim cur Deos ab hominibus colendos dicas, cum Dii non modo hominibus non conſulant, ſed omnino nihil curent, nihil agant?* The ſame *Juſtin Martyr* obſerved in the beginning of his Dialogue with *Tryphon*, ſpeaking to him of the opinion of thoſe Philoſophers who denyed the Doctrine of Providence. Says he, *Hoc vero ad quem illi referant finem intelligere difficile non eſt; Nam hoc efficit ſecuritas atque libertas loquendi, & eos qui hæc docent ſectandi, & quod volunt agendi, & dicendi impunitas.*

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Neque

Neque pœnam aliam metuens, neque bonum quod-que ſperans a Deo.

That men by a denyal of Providence, do only publiſh another Edition of Atheiſm is evident enough. 'Tis in it ſelf equally deſtructive to all Virtue and Religion, and lies in no leſs oppoſition to all true reaſoning, to ſay the higheſt Being no way concerns himſelf with what men do here below, as to ſay there is no ſuch Being at all. That there is ſuch a being, and that this Being is a puniſher of evil doers, and a Rewarder of them that do well, is the great Topick from whence all Religion, and all good Manners are derived. If God regard not what Men do, they are no more obliged in their actions then if there were no God at all: And 'tis not more unreaſonable to deny that God Is, then to admit him to be, and then deny thoſe things that muſt neceſſarily belong to ſuch an Exiſtence.

That the fixed belief of Gods Rule over the world accompanied the notion of his Being, amongſt the beſt and wiſeſt of the Heathen, will appear obvious, if we conſult the writings of *Seneca*, *Plutarch*, *Epictetus*, *Simplicius*, and many others of them. *Balbus* in *Tully* thus begins his Speech. *Omnino dividunt noſtri totam iſtam de Diis immortalibus queſtionem,*

nem, in partes quatuor. Primum docent esse Deos, deinde quales sint, tum Mundum ab his Administrari, postremo eos consulere rebus humanis. Those of our opinion always divide the question about the Gods into four parts; First, we teach that the Gods are: Then how they exist! Then, that the World is governed by them: And lastly, that they take the care of humane affairs. And *Tully* in his second Book *de Legib.* tells us, *Persuasum hoc sit a principio hominibus Dominos esse omnium rerum ac moderatores Deos, eaq; quæ gerantur eorum geri ditione atque numine. Men have believed this from the beginning that the Gods governed the World, and that all things were under their Dominion and Rule. Epicurus*, who first assaulted the Doctrine of Providence, and by a denyal of that found a way to transform the notion of God, so far as it concerns men, into a meer nullity, would needs suppose it a thing below the greatness of God to take any notice of humane affairs, or concern himself with what men did here. And therefore *Cotta* tells *Velleius* in *Cicero*, speaking of him, *In illis selectis ejus brevibusq; sententiis quas appellatis, κυρίας δόξας, hæc ut opinor prior sententia est, Quod Beatum & Immortale est, id nec habet nec exhibet cuiquam negotium. This was one of his chiefest Aphorisms,*

risms, that the Blessed and Immortal Being had no imployment himself, nor occasioned any trouble to others, which appeared a thing so absurd in it self, and so Heterodox to all true Philosophy, that the best Moralists sharply rebuked his folly, thought this opinion of his to be *Turpis & indigna*, base and unworthy, and refused him the Honour to be stiled a Philosopher, who would be so unworthy to suppose that sloth and stupidity in the Deity, which every worthy and good man thought beneath himself. *Aristotle* (though no very good Divine, nor very Orthodox asserter of Providence, yet) so loathed this absurd fiction of *Epicurus*, and a total denial of Providence, that he speaks of it with this keen reflection: sayes he, Diversity of questions requires diversity of answers; Some ask whether Fire be hot! These must be answered by being made to touch it. Some ask whether their Parents are to be honoured! These are not to be discoursed with but rebuked. Others ask whether there be any Providence that Rules the world, and refuse to believe it without apparent demonstrations! Such men (sayes he) should be answered by a Whip, rather than by a Philosopher.

How extreme unreasonable the denial of Providence and Gods universal Rule over the world

world is, how unſuitable and oppoſite to thoſe conceptions of him our own Reaſons dictate to us! will ſoon appear, if we view over thoſe fond ſpeculations men have pleaſed themſelves with about this matter.

Some have confined providence to the Heavens, and limited it to what is above us. Will needs Imagine that God regards nothing beyond the Sphere of the Heavens, and that his Dominion reacheth no farther then the Heavenly Bodies; thoſe they acknowledge, are under a Divine diſpoſure. God ſettles (they grant) the Stars in their courſes, and orders all their Cœleſtial Bodies; but has no concern at all for any thing here below, nor regards what happens on this ſide the Clouds. This folly is ſufficiently confuted, when we conſider how evident it is that the Motions and Influences of the Heavens are all deſigned for the uſe and benefit of Mankind, and the good of all ſublunary things, and are ſtill guided with a conſtant and ſuitable tendency therunto. Now, how unreaſonable is it to ſuppoſe, That God ſhould provide and diſpoſe means in order to an end, and yet have no regard to the end it ſelf! That God ſhould govern the Heavens in order to the good of this lower world, and yet be no way at all concerned about it! And that man (for whoſe ſake chiefly

chiefly all things above, as well as below appear to be made and disposed) should be less regarded then those things made subservient to his use!

Others have Imagined that Providence is exercised about Universals, but not about Singulars; that God takes care of Generals, but nor of particulars. This *Justin Mart.* in his discourse with *Tryphon*, tells him, was the opinion of some Philosophers in *Grace*. Saith he, *Illi etiam nobis persuadere moliuntur Universitatis quidem hujus ac generum specierumq; ipsarum curam gerere Deum, mei autem, atque tui & unius cujusq; singillatim non itidem.* *They will needs perswade us that God hath a general care of the whole, but not a distinct care of you, and I, and of every particular part.* The vanity of which will soon appear, if we consent to this undeniable truth, that all generals result out of particulars, and consist of them. The Species of Mankind subsists in the Individuals and Particulars, comprehended under it: And therefore God cannot be said to take care of Mankind, nor his Providence to extend to it in general, unless it do so in particulars, and his care reach to every Individual man. Abstract the Genus of any sort of Creatures from the Species and particulars, of which it necessarily consists, and 'tis nothing

nothing. When we place Providence ſo upon Generals, as to abſtract it from particulars, we make it a nullity; nor can there be Providence exerciſed over Generals, without a diſtinct care of particulars; becauſe thoſe generals do neceſſarily include each particular. This is excellently proved by *Plato* in his diſcourſe *de Legib.* That the whole of nothing can ſubſiſt, without a diſtinct care of all the particular parts, and therefore infers; 'tis no way fit to be credited, τὸν θεὸν ὄντα σοφώτατον βουλόμενον τι ἐπιμελεῖσθαι καὶ δυνάμενον ὧν μὴ ῥᾴδιον ἐπιμελεῖσθαι σμικρῶν ὄντων μηδαμῆ ἐπιμελεῖσθαι καθάπερ ἀργὸν ἢ δειλόν ἵνα πόνος ῥαθυμοῦν τε τῶν καὶ μεγάλων, *that God who is ſo wiſe and excellent a Being, ſhould neglect to precide over any part of the World, and not take an univerſal care of the whole*; and *Cicero* in his firſt Book *de Divinatione*, upon the ſame ground concludes thus, *Deorum Providentia Mundus adminiſtratur, ijdemque conſulunt rebus Humanis, neque ſolum univerſis, verum etiam ſingulis. The Gods govern the World, and take care of humane affairs, and not only of univerſals, but alſo of ſingulars.*

A third ſort there have been, that will have Divine Providence reach no farther then Men that ſay, 'tis converſant, *circa Homines, non circa Beſtias*, that God deſcends not to

to the care of other Creatures beneath man, nor busies himself with those inferiour parts of the world. This Doctrine seems to have been first set on foot by some of the *Jews*, from whom 'tis probable *Pythagoras* learnt it, and became the teacher of it in *Græce*; for so we find it in *Hierocles*. And it has been too much countenanced since by St. *Jerome*, in in his Exposition of the Propheſie of *Habakkuk*.

That God by his Providence, after a various manner, Rules over the several parts of the world, and guids and disposes them according to the Nature of their Beings, and that proper end to which he first designed them, is not to be denied. But that any parts of the world(those beings beneath the nature of Man) are not under the conduct of Providence, is a position evidently untrue; for if we consider Providence as it relates to preservation, the intire Fabrick of the world, in the whole of it, cannot be continued without a preservation of every part. If we consider Providence as it relates to Rule and Dominion, there can be nothing more plain, then that all Irrational Creatures are so under the Sovereignty and Dominion of Providence; because they are all guided in whatsoever they do to some particular end, and all in general to one common end,

End. Now to move or act towards some end, is the peculiar property of an intelligent Being. And therefore when we see Creatures void of Intelligence, constantly and regularly moving and acting toward some end, and all to a common end: 'Tis plain they are guided by some superiour Intelligence that has a supreme conduct of their Being; which can be no other then that we call God in his Providence.

But the grand and total subverter of the Doctrine of Providence is *Epicurus*, with *Lucretius*, *Pliny*, and others that have in this point embraced his sentiments. They wholly deny all Providence whatsoever: Suppose it a thing beneath the supreme Being to take any notice of humane affairs; Imagine the world wholy left to it self, and that God is retired above, having not the least imployment himself, nor at all regarding what others do.

To what just contempt, and to how palpable a confutation *Epicurus* and his followers, and all deniers of Providence, expose themselves by the vanity and folly of such an opinion, will, with great ease, be made to appear to every impartial understanding. If God exercise no Dominion over the world, nor take any care of its preservation, if there

be no ſuch thing as Providence in either kind, it muſt either be becauſe he cannot, or becauſe he will not. To ſay the firſt, is to deny what men ſay before, when they admit (which the *Epicureans* do) the exiſtence of an Infinite Being. 'Tis a groſs contradiction to ſay God cannot rule the world, and yet to ſay he is Infinite. (And 'tis plain, Infiniteneſs is inſeperably annexed to his Being) If there be ſuch a being that was before all, and infinitely above all, there can be no reaſonable doubt of his power and ability, to rule and command all, and where ever his making and firſt framing of all is acknowledged there cannot be any; for there can be no ſubjection in it ſelf ſo natural and ſo neceſſary as in what is made, to him that made it; nor any Dominion ſo abſolute or ſo certain as in the firſt framer of all things. To ſay that God cannot Rule the world, is, in effect, to ſay, there is no God that made the world: for the admiſſion of the one, naturally infers the poſſibility of the other. 'Tis much eaſier to ſuppoſe Gods Dominion over it now, then his Creation of it at firſt; and he that denyes a poſſibility of the former, can upon no good ground ſuppoſe the latter. Secondly, to ſay that God will not, that is, though he could Rule and order the world, yet out of choiſe he refuſeth do it,

and

and hath designedly withdrawn him self from all the concerns of it, is an affirmation highly unreasonable; and that upon many accounts.

First, This is plainly to suppose (if we admit Creation) that God made the world to no purpose at all, beyond its bare existence, and without any designed end to himself by it, future to its simple Being: for Providence is nothing but the preserving and guiding of all things existing, to a common end. 'Tis to suppose a world capable of many noble and excellent ends, when made, without proposing any end at all to himself by it. The meanest Composers in the smallest matters are never guilty of such an absurdity! 'Twere strange to Imagine the highest Wisdom, and the perfection of it should (in that act of making the World) fall beneath the exercise of every common discretion. No man attempts any thing without a prospect of some end: If God have layed by all thoughts of the world, and concerns himself no more about it then as if no such thing as the World were at all in being (which by the *Epicurean* Doctrine he does) What end can we conceive God to have in the first making of it? Nay, 'tis not only unreasonable to suppose that God infinitely wise, should make the World without proposing any end, but without proposing the

higheſt and utmoſt end to himſelf the World is capable of. If any man ſay, that God in making the World, had no other end but the making of it, and that the bare act of making it was his end; he ſayes that which is extreamly abſurd, and that upon theſe two Grounds. Firſt, The bare act of Gods making the World could never be his end; becauſe the World it ſelf, when made, barely conſidered, only as made, and in his ſimple exiſtence could not be his end; and if ſo, then the act of making it could not be his end, becauſe all the rational End of making muſt lie in the Thing made. Whoever makes, without reſpect to the thing made by him, makes without reſpect to the true End of making, which cannot be ſuppoſed of the workmanſhip of God. Now; that the ſimple being of the World (abſtractedly conſidered from all uſe and exerciſe of it) could not be Gods only end when he firſt made it, is evident from hence, that no being, *quâ* a being, can be Gods ultimate end but his own being. All other created beings contain Gods end in their exiſtency, as they relate in that exiſtency to a dependance upon him, a ſubſerviency and ſubjection to him: Not ſimply as they are beings, ſeperately conſidered from the dependency and uſe of their beings. And therefore, in the denial of Providence,

vidence, and Gods being any way concern'd in humane affairs, the *Epicureans* will be forced to confeſs God made the World without propoſing any End at all to himſelf by it, unleſs it were its bare exiſtence, which ſeperate from a ſubordination to him, and a dependance upon him (all which purely relate to the notion of Providence) is impoſſible to be his end in any being but his own. Secondly, all ſuch as ſay God had no end in making the World but the making of it, muſt needs upon their own ſuppoſition acknowledge, that end ceaſed when the World was once made. And then we muſt Imagine, God, by his Wiſdom and Power to frame ſuch a ſtructure as this world is, and yet deſign it to no uſe nor end at all, when it ſhould be exiſting, and that ſo great variety of ſuch excellent beings, capable of ſuch noble Ends, ſhould be made by him, with ſuch a capacity, without any farther determination or future deſign about them; and that God has continued this World, or at leaſt ſuffered it to continue, ever ſince it was firſt exiſting, without any regard at all to it, or any end deſigned to himſelf by it, all which is moſt ridiculous to conceive, that infinite Wiſdom and power ſhould ſtand by, and have no ſhare at all in ſuch an affair as the continual revolution of this World.

Secondly, By ſaying that God refuſeth either to govern or care for the World, that (being bleſſed and happy in himſelf) he looks no farther than the enjoyment of his own bleſſedneſs within himſelf; we deny the neceſſary effects and emanations of that goodneſs which we muſt needs aſcribe to him. 'Tis a true and a general Axiome of all ſubordinate good (and much more of the higheſt good) *Bonum eſt ſui Diffuſivum*, that's comprehended in its Definition. Who can believe that infinite goodneſs ſhould not delight in communicating good? and ſhould deny to care for others? This principle lies ſecured in every worthy Breaſt here below, and ſhall we ſhut it out of Heaven? ſhall we believe God to be of a contrary Nature to what we our ſelves think beſt? that were highly to divorce our ſelves from the notion of him as our Creator; can any man reaſonably believe it conſiſting with Gods goodneſs to make a World that he knew would be ſubject to ſo much trouble and ſorrow as this is, and reſolve to be no way concern'd about it? What impotency and want does this World give us a proſpect of! or whether does it naturally tend for ſupply, but to infinite goodneſs? T'were a moſt high indignity offered to the Divine bounty to ſuppoſe God ſo to withdraw himſelf; and

'tis

'tis no leſs a wrong done to mankind, to exclude them from the Rule and protection of ſuch a being as that we aſcribe to God, wherein they muſt needs be moſt happy and beſt ſecured. 'Tis to forbid the moſt neceſſary actings of the ſupreme being, and deny to our ſelves the greateſt comfort of our own beings. VVe ſee in all things created a natural care to preſerve their off-ſpring, and a conſtant overſight of what Nature has charg'd them withall; And from whence ſhould this excellent *genius*, both in rational and irrational creatures, be derived, but from the firſt framer and compoſer of all things? And can we ſuppoſe *leſs* in *Him* then he hath given to *us*? Can we, with any good reaſon, put that upon God which would be the greateſt reproch to our ſelves? VVhich is, not to take care of what belongs to us, and what we are but the Secondary Authors of? VVhen we ſee every Creature, by the Law of its being, obliged to the care of its proper and peculiar part, 'twere a moſt unworthy and unnatural conception to think the great God did not take care of the whole.

Thirdly, In denying Providence, we deny the neceſſary effects of the higheſt Juſtice: nay, of any Juſtice. Indeed, we charge perfect Juſtice with the greateſt Injuſtice. VVere

it not so, if God should refuse to punnish the vile practices of men toward himself and toward each other? To suffer them to blaspheme Him in Heaven, and to commit all outrages upon Earth, and take no notice at all of it? When, by the infinity of his knowledge, he cannot be ignorant of it, and by the infinity of his power, he cannot be unable to punish it? And were it not high Injustice, should we suppose no reward for the Righteous, nor regard of them? Nor any recompence for all the Virtuous Religious actions we see performed amongst Mankind? Who is able so unworthily to conceive of God? What madness is it to acknowledge the perfection of all those excellent Attributes we can conceive off to be in God, and yet suppose an exercise of them beneath what we find amongst Men! To deny that to Him which we dayly experience and applaud in every virtuous and good Man! What good Man, in Authority, would refuse to punish an offender, or reward a Worthy action? And yet, if we believe *Epicurus*, we must imagine God to sit still in Heaven, and take no notice at all either of that Good or Evil which is dayly practiced amongst Mankind. This Doctrine of *Epicurus* does, in trueth, transform the notion of God into a meer Idol.

'Tis

'Tis in effect to ſay God has eyes, but ſees not: He has Hands, but works not: He is in Heaven, able to do what he will, but his will is to do juſt nothing. God, as he is the Supreme Maker of all, ſo he is thereby neceſſarily the Supreme Lord and Ruler over all. The right of Supreme Magiſtracy is inſeperable to his being, as containing the higheſt Power and Authority both Legiſlative and Executive. All Dominion, whether Natural or Political, is derived from him as the Head of it, and He himſelf is the Supreme Magiſtrate over the whole, and can no otherwiſe ſtand related to the World. We can no other way rightly conceive of Gods Power and Authority but as Magiſtratical, nor look upon him in any other notion then as our chief and ſupreme Ruler; and ſo are to take no meaſure of His proceedings from the actings of private perſons, but are to ſuppoſe God ſo to deal with the World as the ſupreme diſpenſer of Juſtice, and placed in the higheſt Seat of Magiſtratical Authority. And if this be true (as moſt demonſtrably 'tis ſo) how contrary is *Epicurus* his Doctrine to a right apprehenſion of God! and how inconſiſtent with it! How inſeperably is providence annexed to all true Conceptions of him! And what a poor account does *Epicurus* give us of God

God without it? What a Magiſtrate does he render the moſt ſupreme Magiſtrate? One that neither *relieves* the *oppreſſed*, *puniſhes* the *guilty*, *rewards* the *well-doer*, nor indeed takes any notice of what his Subjects either do or ſay. 'Tis in ſhort, impoſſible to ſeparate ſupreme Magiſtracy from God; His being ſuppoſeth it; 'tis evidently proved virtually and eſſentially to belong to him, from an induction of all particulars relative to it. And if ſo, 'tis extreamly unreaſonable not to ſuppoſe from his hand, the moſt compleat and perfect exerciſe of all Magiſtratical Authority that we are any way able to conceive of.

Fourthly, To ſuppoſe that God declines the exerciſe of all Empire and Rule over the world, is to ſuppoſe him to decline the moſt eſſential property of his own being, and the nobleſt exerciſe of any being. Firſt, the moſt eſſential property of his own being. 'Tis as eſſential to God to Rule as to Be. Gods exiſtence, we ſay, is a neceſſary exiſtence; He cannot but be; which implies a neceſſary ſuperiority. That which cannot but *be*, cannot but be above all. For, whatever has a power ſuperior to it, has a poſſibility not to *be*. And that which cannot but be *above* all, cannot but Rule *over* all. Becauſe, the

the very *being* of ſuperiority lies in the exerciſe of *Dominion*, and cannot be upheld without it. To fancy the *exiſtence* of infinite Power without *exerciſe*, is to frame an *Idol* in in our own imaginations, and to fancy what is in it ſelf impoſſible to be. Infinite Power to Rule, implies infinite Actual Rule. We can never ſeparate between infinite *Power* and infinite *Dominion*. The being of the one neceſſarily implies the other. Whatever is in God is actually in him. God has not only virtually an infinite power, but an infinite power in Act. Infinite power muſt needs be in continual Act, and cannot be otherwiſe, becauſe Infinite. And therefore all things muſt needs be in ſubjection to it. VVe are ſo to conceive of all Gods Attributes as things not only in *Potentia*, but in *Facto eſſe*. Gods infinite VViſdom is not onely an *ability* to be wiſe, but an infinite *Act* and *Exertion* of wiſdome. So his infinite *knowledg* is not only an infinite *capacity* of knowing, and *ability* to know, but an infinite actual knowledge of all things, excluding an *ignorance* of *any thing*. 'Twere to annex imperfection to Gods Attributes to ſay, they are not in *exerciſe*; *Power*, in its *exerciſe*, implies *Dominion*. 'Tis from *defect* where 'tis not ſo *exerted*. And therefore, from infinite *Power* in which there can be no

no *defect*, muſt needs ariſe infinite *Dominion*. 'Twas a childiſh conceit of *Epicurus* to think that infinite Power could be *ſet by*, and not be in continual *operation*, or that any thing could move, act, or exiſt, without a neceſſary ſubjection to infinite Power. Should the world rule it ſelf, and be under no ſubjection, Gods Power would ceaſe to be, what it can never but be, which is, infinite in its Supremacy. Should any one thing be done in the VVorld and not come under the exerciſe of Gods ſupreme and Sovereign Rule, his Power would ceaſe to be Infinite, becauſe not *actually* above all: VVhich it can never be unleſs it *actually Rule* over all.

Beſides, Were it a ſuppoſition capable of admiſſion, or ſuch a thing as could pretend to a poſſibility, that infinite power could be *ſet by*, and *exiſt* without *exerciſe*, who could embrace ſo groſs an abſurdity as to believe that God ſhould thus determine with himſelf, that the beſt *uſe* that could be made of infinite Power, were, to make *no uſe at all* of it! And ſo, having at firſt made the World by his wiſdome and Power, ſhould leave it perfectly to its own *Chanceable* revolutions, without any farther effect or communication of either.

Secondly,

Secondly, We ſuppoſe God (in declining the Rule of the World) to decline the nobleſt exerciſe of *any* being. VVe can think of nothing more excellent then *Rule* and *Dominion* to imploy the largeſt mind, and diſpenſe the compleateſt virtues. And is it reaſonable to diveſt the higheſt Power of it? To *have* Power, and to *uſe* it for the good of others, is that we moſt applaud amongſt men. Thoſe beſt faculties we have (by which we can only conceive of Gods excellent nature) their *Perfection* lies in *Communication*. He that Rules *well*, does the *beſt* thing we can frame an *idæa* of. And therefore the Rule of the VVorld is the moſt excellent thing we can aſcribe to God. *Cicero*, in his 2 Book *De Nat. Deor.* ſpeaks fully to this. *Nihil eſt* (ſays he) *præclarius mundi adminiſtratione Deorum, Igitur Conſilio adminiſtratur mundus: Nihil eſt præſtantius Deo; Ab eo igitur neceſſe eſt mundum regi.* Thoſe of the beſt endowments we think the fitteſt for Empire. And the more *excellent* any ſoul is, the more inlarged and vigorous in *action* it is. And ſhall we ſuppoſe God not to Rule in Heaven? Shall we think him very vain that ſhould tell us? VVe then make the beſt *Uſe* of all humane abilities, when we *leaſt imploy* them! Becauſe the great and natural end of all *ability* for

for action, is action: And yet shall we suppose that God layes by the exercise of all his Infinite attributes, and wholly retires himself in Heaven? Who is able (without assaulting his own Reason) to admit such conceptions of that excellent being we ascribe to God, and father that upon him which would make up the Character of a very ill man.

But to render the absurdity of this Doctrine more evident to every impartial man, let me ask the *Epicureans* this question; If God doth not rule the World, and that darling Axiome of *Epicurus* be true, that *Quod eternum beatumque sit nec habere ipsum negotii quidquam, nec exhibere alteri.* How comes God to give Laws to the World? to admit the one, and still to affirm the otherwere ridiculous; for they are inseperable *Relatives.* All Laws necessarily relate to *Rule* and *Dominion*, on the one hand, and *obedience* and *subjection* on the other hand. That God has planted a natural Law in every mans *Being*, relating to his own *Superiority* and mans *Subjection*, is in truth past all rational denial. Whence comes that inherent distinction of good and evil every man is born with? and which nothing humane can either alter or abrogate? but with reference to Gods authority over him? What is that we call Conscience in every man, but

Gods

Gods vicegerent here below, and the Vicar-general of his ſupreme Rule over the World? *Epicurus* perceiving that if he once admitted any ſuch thing as that we call the Law of Nature, or an inherent diſtinction of good and evil in Men, Providence (from thence) would neceſſarily be implied, poſitively denyes it; ſaying there is no ſuch thing as the Law of Nature, nor any thing of that kind; and maintains this Hypotheſis, that there is nothing in the naked Eſſence of things that diſcriminates them; but that all difference of things comes from Cuſtom and Poſitive Law. Firſt, I muſt needs ſay that *Epicurus* by this Doctrine, renders himſelf unworthy of all debate and diſcourſe, becauſe he denies common experience, and what every man may know to be true from his own breaſt, without farther information. And there needs no other demonſtration then an appeal to all impartial Reaſon in the Caſe. *Ariſtotle* ſayes (and upon good grounds) that no diſpute ought to be admitted againſt experience; becauſe, if I once bring that into queſtion I diſclaim all ground of certainty. And therefore amongſt all wiſe men, things of common experience are ſtill excluded and ſet aſide from all debate and diſpute. How great ſtreſs ſoever the *Epicureans* lay upon this Principle (and they lay very

very great upon it) both from the Reason of things in themselves considered, and from common experience, 'tis proved to be equally false and pernitious. The Law of Nature I call *the dictates of right Reason, shewing good or evil to be in some things by their agreement or disagreement with the rational Nature, and so consequently, to be commanded and forbidden by the Author of Nature, God himself.* The truth of this definition will appear very evident; for first, a *Natural Law* must needs be seated in the *Rational faculty*, as being the *superior* part of man. Nothing can truly or properly be said to be a Rule or a Law to a Rational Being, arising from it self, but the genuine dictates of Reason. Secondly, whatsoever my Reason tells me is in it self good (by its agreement to that judgment my Reason makes of what is so) I must needs think that agreeable to the Nature of God, and must needs think my self under obligation to it from God. Under obligation to it I must be, because of mine own judgment about it; and that Judgment must needs oblige me as a Law given to me from God; because 'twas he made me with a faculty so judging, and is in truth himself the author of this Judgment by creating the faculty that necessarily makes it. Whatever Judgment God makes a man with, must needs be

be a Law from God given to him, and he can never depart from it without offending him that was the Author of it, and placed it within him as a Rule of his Being. Whatever judgment God made me with, concerning my ſelf and all other things, is his Judgment: And what is Gods Judgment is a Law to me, and I can never *oppoſe* it without *ſin*, being in mine own exiſtence, made with a neceſſary ſubjection unto him. Now I ſay, that by the Judgment of the Rational faculty, and the dictates of right Reaſon, Mankind neceſſarily make ſuch a *diſtinction* of things; that is, they determine ſome actions and ſome things to be in themſelves intrinſically good, and others intrinſically evil, from the Nature of the things themſelves, as they ſtand related to the Rational Judgment, abſtracted from all collateral conſiderations whatever. And there is no reaſon to be given of that, more then of the faculty of Reaſon it ſelf, that Man is created by God with a faculty ſo judging. He that denies the being of this natural Law, muſt obliterate the judgment of Reaſon, by which every man becomes a neceſſary and unrepealable Law to himſelf in his opinion of things: 'Tis in effect to deny a man to be *Rational*, to make all things alike to him, as to the good or evil of them; becauſe the faculty we call Reaſon

exiſts in every man with ſuch an innate diſtinction. No man (uſing his Reaſon) can think falſhood and truth equally good in themſelves. Juſtice and injuſtice, Mercy and Cruelty are diſtinguiſhed by the fundamental conſtitution of our beings, and can never be equal competitors to a Rational approbation. A man may as well ſay, that the determinations that men make upon the plaineſt demonſtrations depend not upon the intrinſick certainty of the Rational faculty, as to ſay, their determinations about good and evil do not ſo. For the one lie, every jot, as connate to the Judgment of the Rational faculty as the other. A corrupt vicious man has the Judgment of all unbiaſſed Reaſon againſt him, as much as a falſe concluſion in Mathematicks: And a Virtuous man for him, as much as the moſt evident demonſtrable Truth. No man (of untainted intellectuals) can equally eſteem a Religious *Socrates*, and a profane *Caligula*, a ſenſual *Sardanapalus*, and a virtuous *Cato*. Many things appear to us in themſelves intrinſically good, and ſo oblige us from the dictates of Reaſon, and thoſe primary ſtatutes of Nature, and no poſitive Law can alter or ſuperſede the Obligation. That Children ſhould obey their Parents, and not Parents their Children, has no indifferency in it; nor can the

the Obligation be removed or inverted by any Cuſtom or poſitive Law, that the Deity ſhould be venerated is a Statute of Nature. *Epicurus* himſelf confeſſeth *we are to venerate the Deity for its excellency.* But upon what ground I would know? If upon the ground of our natural light, and an Obligation ariſing from the innate dictates of Reaſon, he muſt then admit the Laws of Nature; and, by ſo doing, 'tis certain he deſtroys his own Doctrine, and will be forced to acknowledge a Providence. If barely upon poſitive Law, he falls under this horrible abſurdity, to make it at the pleaſure of *Men* (for ſo are all things that depend meerly upon poſitive Law) whether the Deity ſhall be ſo venerated or no. If the being of a Deity, and the excellency of ſuch a being, be eſtabliſhed by natural light, I am ſure the *Veneration* of him is ſo too; and if it be not ſo eſtabliſhed, but made to be indifferent to believe whether there be ſuch being or no, Men may then by their own pleaſure make and unmake their Gods, as they do their Pictures and Statues. When we are told we muſt venerate the Deity for its excellency, we are told that which is true; but as *Epicurus* did circumſtantiate this Doctrine, 'twas not like to produce much Religion; for, at the ſame time, he denies the being of all na-

tural Laws, and makes all things in themselves, indifferent, and also denies all Providence, and any future Estate after this life, by which all rewards and punishments are excluded; so that the *Epicurean* Religion is in the very foundation of it wholly Precarious, and depends upon the pleasure of men, or else destructive to it self and its own Principles. The Deity is to be venerated for its excellency (sayes the *Epicureans*) that is, if Men please to make Laws it shall be so; for otherwise, 'tis, in it self indifferent. If they say, 'tis not indifferent, but that we are obliged so to do by a natural determination of Reason; that's an acknowledging of the Law of Nature, and therein an admission of Providence. To say the Deity must be venerated, and at the same time to say that all actions and things are in themselves indifferent is plainly to say, there are no stated rules for this veneration, farther than positive Laws make them, and that a man may practise any thing, the very worst of things (supposing positive Laws not to forbid them) and yet be a Religious venerator of the Deity; the admission of which is loathsome to all Mankind. To say that a Man must venerate the Deity, and yet to annex no reward to the doing of it, nor any punishment to the not doing of it, here nor hereafter,

after, is to prepare men to be Religious, by telling them before hand, if they be ſo, it ſhall be no whit the better for them, and if they be not ſo, it ſhall not be one jot the worſe. This notion of *Epicurus* (which yet is the whole of his Divinity) ſo circumſtantiated, ſeems to me ſo weak an attempt toward any thing of Religion, that I rather think of him as *Cicero* does, *That he was a man perfectly without any Religion, and had no belief of a Deity at all.* For ſo ſays he of him, in the end of his firſt Book *De Nat. Deor. Verius eſt igitur illud nimirum quod familiaris omnium noſtrum Poſidonius diſſeruit. In libro quinto De natura Deorum. Nullos eſſe Deos Epicuro videri: quæq, is de Diis immortalibus dixerit invidiæ deteſtandæ gratia dixiſſe.*

Two things (of which the whole world, in all ages, have had experience) do evidently diſcover the falſhood of this poſition, that all things are in themſelves alike to mankind, till cuſtome and poſitive Law make a difference. Firſt, VVe find men paſſing a judgment upon themſelves in the Cloſet of their own *breaſts*, accuſing and excuſing themſelves about matters no way connizable and no way determined by any poſitive Law, but meerly guided herein by the unavoidable evidence that their own Reaſon gives in concerning the

good or evil of things. In all times and ages this Truth hath been eſtabliſhed. For as *Cicero* ſays truely, *Time wears out errours of opinion, but confirmes all Natural truths.* Every mans own reaſon carryes an innate condemnation in it to ſome things as evil, and an approbation of others as good, and this no way founded in Cuſtomes or Laws of times or places, but in the very faculty of Reaſon it ſelf, and is neither Created nor can be Abrogated by any thing humane. For, as *Philo* ſays well, *Lex mentiri neſcia eſt recta ratio, quæ Lex non ab hoc aut ab illo mortali mortalis, non in Chartis aut Columnis exanimis examina, ſed corrumpi neſcia, quippe ab immortali natura inſculpta in immortali intellectu.* If there were no Laws but poſitive, and what had their riſe among men, were men under no obligation to the natural Light of their own beings; How can we conceive rational creatures to make a Conſcience to themſelves about things no way determined by any ſuch poſitive Laws? What mens Laws reach not, no man can be reaſonably thought to be concern'd in Conſcience about, if there be no Superiour Law of God; becauſe, where there is no Law there can be no offence, and ſo no foundation of Guilt. Nor is it conceivable that cuſtome can be the foundation of ſuch *Conſcience* in men,

men, and of that different *Judgment* they make to themſelves of things, from whence that Conſcience ariſeth; becauſe the principles upon which men go in theſe natural determinations are *generally* the *ſame* and agreed to by *all*. And 'tis highly unreaſonable to ſuppoſe the whole World ſhould every where agree in a cuſtome of judging things to be otherwiſe then indeed they be, and ſubject themſelves in their own breaſts to ſuch an eroneous Judgment, and that the conſtant determination of the publick reaſon of the world, that ſome things are in themſelves good and others are in themſelves evil, was at firſt founded in a miſtake, and that that miſtake became cuſtomary and univerſal. This is a thing that carries the utmoſt of improbability in it, and is in effect, to ſay *mankind* is not *reaſonable*, and to put the *Fool* upon the whole World. Beſides, the determinations of our Reaſon about the good or evil of things, are at the preſent juſtified to us to be pure, and abſtracted from all byas, either from cuſtome or from poſitive Laws, from the nature of the things themſelves and the moſt genuine judgment of Reaſon it ſelf in its judging of them. And he that will ſay that we are no way certain but that our beſt judgment about good and evil may be, for ought we know, grounded upon

custome & so mistaken, may as well say that all other judgment is so too: And so in effect say, we are no way sure but that all the reason of the world's nothing else but a *great customary mistake*

Secondly, There are natural Laws, by which things are in themselves differenced, proved to be *previous* to all positive Laws; Because all positive Laws appear plainly to have their rise from those primary Laws of Nature, and to suppose them. The common principles of Natures Laws have been the common principles of all positive Laws every where. How different soever positive Laws have been amongst themselves in other things, yet the Grand Maxims of Nature founded upon that innate distinction of good and evil men are born withall have been universally admitted by all *Legislators*. General effects, we say, must have general causes. And that general consent we find in all positive Laws to such natural Maxims, does evidently declare such Maximes to be the Universal sentiments of mankind, and those original Laws annexed to the beings of men in their first frame and constitution, by which things in themselves are primarily discriminated antecedently to all positive Laws, and from whence all positive Laws have their subsequent rise.

Should this *Epicurean* doctrine be admitted,

That

That all things are originally and in their own nature alike, till differenced by poſitive Law or Cuſtome, three things would evidently reſult from it; The firſt ruinous to all policy, The ſecond to all Religion, And the third deſtructive to both. Firſt, No Man that thought all things originally indifferent, and the whole world and all the actions of it, as to good or evil, to be *Raſa tabula*, could ever be obliged farther then *force* or his own *intereſt* prevailed upon him. For if all things be originally in themſelves indifferent, and have neither good nor ill in them, 'twas then indifferent whether there ſhould be any *Law-makers*, or any *Laws made*. Authority it ſelf is indifferent; and if that be it ſelf indifferent, and have neither intrinſecal good nor evil in it, my *obedience* muſt needs be indifferent too. For if it be indifferent whether there ſhould be any ſuch thing as civil authority, or no, and civil Authority have no real internal good or ill annexed to it, it muſt needs be indifferent (as to matter of inward Conſcience) whether I ſhould obey it or no. If all things be in themſelves indifferent, 'tis impoſſible for men, by poſitive Laws, to make any thing otherwiſe; becauſe the power by which thoſe poſitive Laws are made, is, in its nature, indifferent too, and has neither eſſential good

nor

nor ill belonging to it. And if ſo, it muſt needs be indifferent to me, whether I obey it or not. For, the things they command or forbid are, in their own nature, indifferent, and the power commanding is, it ſelf, indifferent, as to its own Being, whether it ſhould ſo command or no! For although a thing in it ſelf and all its circumſtances wholly indifferent ceaſeth to be ſo to me, when commanded or forbid by a poſitive Law, becauſe of the conſcience I ought to have of the authority commanding or forbidding, as having an intrinſical good in it, to which I am poſitively obliged, and as a thing in its own nature obligatory to me, yet, were that Authority wholly indifferent in it ſelf, in its being, whether it ſhould be or no, and had no eſſential good or ill in its conſtitution, it muſt needs be indifferent to me whether I ſhould obey it or not! There can never be any good or ill in obedience or diſobedience, where there is a perfect indifferency in the being of that Power that requires it. Secondly, If all things were, to mankind, in themſelves alike and indifferent, and there were no ſuch original diſtinction of good and evil made in the rational nature, 'twere impoſſible ever to frame any amiable or excellent *Idæa* of God. 'Twere all one whatever we thought of him; We might as well think him *cruel* and *unjuſt*,

as

as *merciful* and *juſt*. For, we have no other way to frame an *Idæa* of God, but from that diſtinction of good and evil we make in our own breaſts. When the *Epicureans* tell us *We muſt venerate the Deity for its excellency*, What excellency is it we can aſcribe to God? and from whence can we derive the notion of any ſuch thing? If, to our own reaſons, all things are alike, and there is no innate diſtinction of good and evil in the rational nature, this maxime of the *Epicureans* does, in truth, put a total end to all well-doing, and to all well-thinking, and does utterly extinguiſh all Religion amongſt Mankind. The Nobleſt and beſt ground of all Religion is good thoughts of God, ariſing from an amiable apprehenſion of him in our minds. Without this, 'tis impoſſible to be truely Religious. And this is utterly impoſſible ever to be made, (but upon groſs Deluſion and miſtake) if no one thing be, in the true judgment of men, better then another, but all things, as to their good and evil in themſelves, equal and indifferent. 'Tis that diſtinction founded in the rational nature between good and bad, and an ability ariſing from thence to frame to it ſelf an *Idæa* of excellency and perfection, that is the ground of all right conceptions of God. And indeed, by finding things diſtinguiſhed

guiſhed in our own rational nature, we come to know they are eternally diſtinguiſhed in Gods Nature: Becauſe he himſelf is the Author of our rational nature. And 'tis not reaſonable to conceive he ſhould create a nature contrary to his own. And ſo we know there is not only a Reaſon in our own Breaſts why ſome things are good, and ſome things are evil, but there is an eternal Reaſon in the nature of God why they are ſo! What I think good, I muſt neceſſarily think agreeable to God. And what I think evil, I muſt needs judge *contrary* to him; or elſe I do not anſwer the original notion my reaſon gives me of his being. And ſo, by the diſtinction I find made of things in mine own rational Nature, I come to know there is the ſame Eternal diſtinſtinction in Gods Nature, and ſo an unalterable Obligation ariſing from thence; becauſe my Reaſon tells me, Gods nature muſt be agreeable to what I think moſt excellent by the judgment of that faculty God has made me withall. And of this I am as well aſſured as I am of Gods being; for the ſame faculty that tells me God *Is*, tells me alſo his Nature muſt needs be agreeable to what my reaſon tells me is in it ſelf Holy and Good, and directly oppoſite to whatever it tells me is in it ſelf Evil. Thirdly, were it Cuſtom and Poſitive Laws

that

that did only constitute the difference of Actions and Things, that difference must needs be regulated thereby. And 'twill then unavoidably follow that Custom and Positive Laws might possibly invert the whole frame of things, and that universal opinion of Good and Evil the World is now possessed with; that is, *Honesty*, *Truth* and *Virtue* might come to be in the place of *Wickedness*, *Falshood* and *Vice*. And those we now think the *Best* Actions, reckoned the *Worst*, and the *Worst* adjudged to be the *Best*. The very mention whereof would be as *Nauseous*, as the practise of it would prove *Ruinous* to humane Nature. And every man carries about him, in his own Reason such an innate abhorrency of it as renders it utterly impossible, upon any terms, ever to be.

It would be also a task too hard for the wisest *Epicurean* to give any rational account how the World (without a Divine disposal, and the admission of Providence) should be continued in that orderly frame we see it! never any such thing as the order of the world fell out by *chance*. 'Twere absurd to suppose it, how all things (even some contrary to their own Nature and proper tendency) should be made so *subservient* as they are to a common end. 'Tis not possible for a rational Eye

to

to view over the general *Oeconomy* of the world, arising from the regular motion of each particular, and exclude the influence of Divine Wisdom from it. If we look *up*, of how admirable consideration is the constant course of the Heavens, and the suitable influences of the Heavenly Bodies to the good of things here below! though the motion by the Equator only had been more simple and direct, yet we see they have also an *Oblique* motion, whereby, with more variety, they dispence their favours to the World. The motions of the Stars *Eccentrick* and *Epiciclike*, as the best observers of them find, not only declare the virtue of their own Materials, but plainly point to us the regulation of a superior Agent, which seeing how far they are from the reach of all humane power, can be no other but the Divine Being. If we look downward, we find the Sea and the Waters a standing Monument of Providence. The Sea kept within Bounds, and not suffered to exceed them, restrained from the natural tendency of its own Being; which 'tis plain no humane power could effect. *Aristotle* in his Book of *Wonders*, owns himself a *Convert* to Providence, upon the single consideration that the Land was not drowned in the Waters, and the Earth overwhelmed with the Sea, which

which without a Divine Power must needs be. *Strabo* observes the same necessity of Providence from the position of the Waters, which (sayes he) if you respect only their Quality, and suppose them left to themselves, must needs take place between the Earth and the Air, when as now we behold them confined to one proper Chanel, and interfused in the Earth, so far as to make it more fruitful and useful, nay, we find the Water as *Grotius* observes in subserviency to the good of the whole against its own Nature, sometimes moving upwards, being so composed as to sustain it self in such motion, by a continued *Cohæsion* of parts. Whereſoever we cast our Eyes, the whole of the World, in all the parts of it, does evidently own it self to the manage and product of a wise and excellent Providence, all things moving towards particular Ends, and all those particular Ends issuing themselves into one Common End. To move to an End is the plain effect of an Intelligent Being; And therefore, when we see Creatures without intelligence still moving both to particular and general Ends, 'tis plain they are directed by some intelligence. And we see Creatures Rational, and that have Intelligence moving and acting to Ends superiour to their own intelligence, and which them-

themselves knew not of nor intended, and yet their actings and motions towards them regular; 'tis plain they are conducted by a higher Intelligence. And this in both cases, can be no other but the *highest Intelligence*, who at once comprehends *all Ends* and *all Means* tending to those Ends; which is God himself.

'Tis likewise an irrefragable proof of Providence, that many things have come to pass in this World that have been evidently *supernatural*, and beyond all humane ability to effect; which could never have been, if God be so withdrawn from the World as to be no way an actor in it. What will the *Epicureans* say to all the *Miracles* that have at any time been wrought? and to such things as have come to pass beyond all product of Nature? to deny the fact of such things, and to say they have not been, is at once to impeach all humane Testimony, and to discard the credit of all History. If we admit them, we must needs confess they are the effect of Gods supreme power, and the evident Works of his hands in a providential way; and if so, we shall soon dispatch with *Epicurus*, and spoil his fictitious retirement of God in the Heavens, and bring down the Divine Majesty to an open converse with Mankind, and indeed undeniably esta-

blish

bliſh both his care of, and his ſupreme Rule over this whole World.

Two things there are upon which *Epicurus* at firſt, *Lucretius*, *Pliny*, and all the *Epicureans* ſince, have chiefly juſtified their denial of Providence, and Gods ſupreme Rule over the World. *Firſt*, (ſay they) 'tis a thing beneath the excellent Being of God, for him to concern himſelf with the affairs of this inferiour world, and to take notice of every little paſſage here below; nor can he (as *Pliny* ſayes) be ſuppoſed (without great diſorder to himſelf, and being withdrawn from his own delight and content) to perform the charge *tam multiplicis & triſtis Miniſterij*: *Of ſo multiplicious and ungrateful a function.* *Secondly*, (ſay they) the poſture of things in this World is ſuch, good men often ſuffering, and bad men proſpering: wickedneſs ſucceeding, and Virtue miſcarrying; 'tis ſo often *bene malis & male bonis*, that we cannot believe this World to be governed from above, and that all the affairs of it ſhould be under the conduct of ſuch perfect and excellent attributes as thoſe we aſcribe to God.

The firſt is ſoon anſwered, 'Tis an abſurd diminution of infiniteneſs, and inconſiſtent with it, to limit or diſtinguiſh its comprehenſion, God hath an infinite Comprehenſion,

and cannot but know all things together, or else his Knowledge were not infinite. Nor can there be any distinction made in the manner of his comprehension; great things and small things are all alike, and upon even terms, as to his comprehension and Knowledge of them. Nothing can be above him or below him in any such respect: 'Tis foolish to say any thing is too mean for God to take Cognizance of; because an universal Cognizance of all things, past, present, and to come, is included and necessarily implied in the infinity of his Knowledge. So far the mistake is plain and visible; nothing can possibly happen, of which we can say God takes no notice: But supposing all things that come to pass are known to him, yet (say the *Epicureans*) 'tis not fit to conceive, he any way concerns himself about them, or that he will so far trouble or discompose himself, as to undertake the Rule and Regulation of them; which lazy, slothful dream of *Epicurus*, above all his other Hypotheses, has exposed him to the just contempt of all sober and intelligent men; 'tis so gross and unworthy a conception of the supreme Being, and so great an indignity offered unto him, and most evidently contrary to all those notions that result from the true exercise of our Reasons about him

him, and that will eaſily appear ſeveral ways.

Firſt, I acknowledge there are ſome things God cannot do, God cannot deny himſelf, nor do any thing againſt the Nature of his own Being, That reſults from the perfection of his Being, and is included in the neceſſity of it: But to ſay that whatſoever God can do; that is, can do, as being no way contrary to his Being to do, and ſo has a poſſibility, he may do (I ſpeak not of the bare Imaginary ſuppoſition of what God can do in reſpect of his unlimited power; for ſo we may conceive he may deſtroy the World in a Moment; but his power cannot be actually ſo exerted; that's but a vain fantaſm, unleſs it be correſpondent to his Juſtice, his Mercy, and his other excellent attributes) but to ſay, whatever God can do in ſuch a ſenſe; that is, whatever is not inconſiſtent with his Being to do, and ſo may be done by him, he cannot do without trouble to himſelf, and diſorder to his own excellent Nature, is to deny the eſſentiality of his Being: The inſeperable and eſſential property of Gods Being is perfection. Now if he cannot perfectly act whatever he can act, he is not eſſentiallyperfect, but has a poſſibility of imperfection annexed to his Being. To ſay God could govern this

World if he pleased, 'twere no way contradictory to his Being to do it; but yet if he should do it, it would trouble and discompose him, is to deny his perfection, and plainly admit him capable of imperfection, which is directly opposite to all true notions of his Being; 'tis to suppose, God cannot perfectly do whatever can be done by him, and to suppose perfection not to accompany the utmost possibility of his acting, which is to deny his perfection, and consequently the most inseperable property of his Being. Nor can any man say, the Government of this World, in it self considered, can have any contrariety in it to Gods Being; because Goverment in its own Nature must needs be most suitable to his Being, and 'tis the certain way to bring the whole World into perfect conformity to him. And to say, 'tis contrary to his Being; because it would be a trouble to him, is plainly to say, 'tis contrary to his Being; because his Being is *imperfect*.

Secondly, This is to measure out *Infiniteness* (which can have no measure) by *Finiteness*. 'Tis in short, to measure out God to our selves by our *own Line*; and when we acknowledge his Being to be compleat in all Infinite perfections, to measure out the actings of those perfections by our own greatest imper-

perfections; and what can be more vain and leſs reaſonable, then to carry up thoſe diſtinctions we make in our own Actings, to the Actings of God, whom we acknowledge infinite and perfect, when thoſe diſtinctions ariſe, viſibly from our own imperfection in Acting. 'Tis the limited extent of our own Beings that makes us reckon things *above* us, and *below* us; no ſuch diſtinction can be made where there is infiniteneſs of Knowledge, and infiniteneſs of power. All things are under an even conſideration to ſuch infinite Attributes; and 'tis becauſe of our own great imperfections that labour and trouble attends us in what we do: and ſhall we ſuppoſe God capable of that, in the exerting of his infinite and perfect Attributes? 'Twas moſt unlike a Philoſopher to ſay, God would not govern the World, nor take any care of it; becauſe it would trouble him ſo to do. 'Twas plainly in other terms, to utter this contradiction, God, who is infinitely perfect, would not govern the World, becauſe he is imperfect. *Epicurus*, by this Divinity of his, deſerves to be reckoned with ſuch of the profane and fabulous Poets, who uſually aſcribed the *Infirmities* (nay, the *debaucheries*) of the Worſt Men to the Beſt of their Gods, and transferred the higheſt notions they had of their Gods to

very ill men; and amongst such *Cicero* ranks him, and concludes against his Divinity with this very good position. *Nihil est quod Deus efficere non possit, & ullo fine labore.*

Thirdly, If the happiness of the Deity lies in a total retreat to his own perfections, and the concerns of the world would be a trouble to him. If that be a sufficient Reason against all Providence, 'tis much more so against all Creation, and whoever upon that account does with *Epicurus* deny Gods providential Rule and Dominion, is engaged to embrace the whole of his other Doctrines against Creation: for would it trouble and discompose the Deity to Rule the World now, it must needs do so to make it before. If that Reason be good against *Providence* now, 'twas good against *Creation* at first; either God acted against the grand Principle of his own felicity then, or else 'tis consistent with his Providence now. Besides that, 'tis Childish to think God would make any thing too *high* or too *low* for his own *Dominion*; or that he should *Create* a World that would be a trouble to himself to *Govern*: Nor can we imagine that any thing God thought fit at first to make, and be himself the Author of, should ever be unworthy of his *care*, or beneath his *Regulation*. 'Twere to impeach his *wisdom* in

in *making*, or his *Goodneſs* in *not regarding* what himſelf at firſt *produced*. God muſt needs know alſo from everlaſting all the enſuing Conſequences of what he at the firſt made. He ſaw, *uno intuitu*, whatever would happen and come to paſs. And 'tis no way ſuppoſable that God (with ſuch afore-ſight and infinite Comprehenſion of all things) ſhould *make* ſuch a World, the future Effects and Conſequences whereof ſhould be unworthy his *notice*, or unfit for him to *diſpoſe*, or a trouble to him to *regard*. Or indeed, that any thing ſhould ever come to paſs, from what God firſt gave an Exiſtence to, that ſhould not naturally and neceſſarily fall under his *Regulation*, and be moſt ſuitable to his *Dominion*, and the exertion of his own excellent Attributes, and be, at laſt, over-ruled by him to ſome wiſe and excellent End.

The other Objection made againſt Providence, from the *various ſucceſſes* all humane Actions are accompanied with; ſometimes the worſt Actions, and the worſt Men proſpering, and the beſt miſcarrying, is that which the greateſt oppoſers of Providence have ſtill moſt applauded themſelves in. And ſo far it prevailed with ſome *Philoſophers* heretofore, that although they admitted of Pro-

vidence in all *natural* things, supposing they could not be whole without it, yet they much doubted, if not wholly denyed it, in all things *Moral* and *Political*. 'Tis from hence, no doubt, that the greatest *Atheism* in the world hath arisen. Men have taken occasion from hence not only to dispute the notion of Providence, but to question the *Being* of *God himself*; thinking them (as indeed they are) inseperable Relatives; and not only upon a general consideration of the various and uncertain disposal of things; but Men have also taken up Pikes against Providence and Religion upon *particular* occasions; because their own Interests were not gratified thereby. Hence it was that *Diagoras* first set up for an *Atheist*; because the Gods did not immediately strike a perjured Person dead in the place, as he desired. Hence it was that *Cato* (though a Stoical asserter of Providence before) when he saw the Affairs of the *Roman* State decay under the conduct of *Pompey*, whom he esteemed a Patriot of his Countrey, and wished well to, and beheld *Cæsar* prospering in his attempts to what he thought a tyranny, he falls foul upon Providence, and professed, that he saw a fallacious instability in the Government of the Gods: That *Pompey* was ever succesful when he did

no

no good with his victories, but never proſpered when he implied his Armies for the freedom of his Countrey. Hence it was that *Cotta* in *Tully* makes ſo great an Harangue againſt Providence. That the two *Scipio's* and ſo many good Patriots had *miſcarried*, and in particular, that his Uncle *Rutilius* was baniſhed, and his friend *Druſus* ſlain. But ſetting aſide all thoſe particular occaſions, and private Intereſts, upon which men have been driven to a diſguſt of the notion of Providence, (which yet have been, and ſtill are very many and frequent) The *general* courſe of the World is viſibly ſuch as gives a real Ground to this Objection: And therefore a diſtinct and particular Anſwer ought to be given to it.

As God, in making the World has left us undeniable Evidence, that he himſelf is the Author of it, but yet has left us without an Anſwer to many queſtions men may ask about it, and made it very ſuitable to our reaſon to think we ſhould be ſo left, and to ſuppoſe a finite capacity not fully able to comprehend the product of Infinite Wiſdom and Power, ſo in his *Rule* over the World we have undeniably Evidence that he does *Rule*, but in the *manner* of his doing it we ſee many paſſages that far out-go our comprehenſion. If any man ſay,

say, that in Gods first *make* of the World we acquiesce singly in his *Sovereignty*, nor need we go farther therein then the bare act of his Will; but in his *Rule* of the World 'tis not so; there we expect the visible effects of his Justice, suitable to those natural Laws he has given to us, and that capacity of judging between just and unjust, by which we ascend upward, and come to be ascertained, that there is a supreme and perfect Justice in God. I answer, 'tis true that Gods Will was the great Reason, at first, of the *make* of the world; but yet we must look upon his *Will* as the Effect of his *wisdom*, and it cannot be otherwise; God could not *will* to make any thing that would not be *Wisely* made, when it was made, nor can we suppose he should. And yet 'twere as reasonable to deny Gods *make* of the World; because I cannot see the visible Effects of his Wisdom in every part of it, as to deny his *Rule* of the World; because in every passage of it his Justice is not visible to me. All the Philosophers heretofore agreed to this, as a general Truth, that *Nature* produced nothing in vain: And yet never any nor all of them could give a distinct account of the Reason and Use of every particular. If there be sufficient grounds to assure me, that God made the World in the *general*, 'tis absurd

ſurd to queſtion the Wiſdom or the Reaſon of any Particular. So if there be Evidence ſufficient to eſtabliſh Gods general Providence over the whole, his Juſtice in Particulars is thereby neceſſarily implied. The being of Providence in general is not only proved upon ſuch rational grounds as every unprejudiced man muſt needs acquieſce in, but in many things we are experimentally convinced of the Being of it, from the Effects of it. He that denies the exiſtence of Providence, can admit but of two ways, by which any thing can be ſuppoſed to come to paſs; either from the Moral determinations of Men and their Actings thereupon, or elſe from ſome purely *Natural* Cauſe. Now 'tis evident that many things have and do come to paſs in a viſible judicial way, which have not their riſe from any humane Judgment, nor can, with any good Reaſon, be derived from any natural operation, and can be aſcribed to nothing elſe but Gods ſupreme Judgment. Virtue and Religion have been often rewarded, and wickedneſs brought to a due puniſhment, before Mens Eyes in this World, by ways unthought of and undeſigned by any, and out of the reach of all humane Authority, and in ſuch a manner as no man, impartially judging, can poſſibly imagine to come to paſs

pass by a meerly casual conjunction of natural Causes, but must needs acknowledge an effect of Divine Justice therein. And of this we are informed by the Records of all Ages; and no one Age passeth without some experience of it.

This objection (how great soever it may seem to be) will be sufficiently removed in every candid opinion, if two things be made appear. First, That there is good ground upon which to establish the belief of a providence in *general*, which hath been proved already. And Secondly, that a satisfactory account may be given how the present course of the world and this providence may very well consist together. And this latter may be done by the consideration of two things; First, our own great Incapacity to judge of the whole of providence, or of very many parts of it. And secondly, the rational supposition of a *Future State*. The first ought to make us cautious not to impeach providence hastily, nor to deny it when we cannot fully comprehend it. The second ought fully and finally to satisfy us in all such cases where we see Gods providence and his justice are not in this world reconcileable. For the first, How reasonable is it to conceive that the ways and methods of God in his providence should not

be

be fully graſped by our comprehenſion, when he is ſo much above us in thoſe excellent attributes by which they are contrived and brought about. The Rule of the world and the harmony of providence in conducting all things to a *common end*, is an effect of the ſame infinity by which the world was at firſt produced. 'Tis unreaſonable for us, when God Rules, to expect an exact and perfect Knowledg of all his proceedings. No humane abilities can create a competent Judg of the whole, or of very many particular parts of Gods providential Rule over the World, and that for theſe three Reaſons. Firſt, God knows the *Aims*, *Ends* and *Intentions* of all Men in what they do; he ſees the *inſide* as well as the *outſide* of the whole World, and proceeds according to the compleatneſs and intire Circumſtances of every Action. This we are no way capable of, and ſo, in many paſſages of his Providence, no fit Judges of his proceedings. 'Tis a great piece of folly to judg of Concluſions, when we are uncertain of the Premiſes; and to call in queſtion Gods determinations, when we know not the grounds of them. Secondly, God has deſigns to accompliſh and bring about in this World, of which we are totally ignorant, and 'tis very unwiſe to find fault with what

God

God does, and be angry that we cannot comprehend it when we know nothing of those Ends 'tis designed to. 'Twas weakly done of *Cato*, and a great defection from his *discretion*, to fall foul upon Providence; because he could not find out a Reason why *Cæsar* had the conquest of *Pompey*, when he must needs be ignorant of that future *Monarchy* (and all the Consequences of it) God designed to set up in *Rome*, upon the foundation of his *Successes*. We see often, by a subsequent course of Providence, great Reason for that of which we could give no account at first. The future Events of good Mens *sufferings* often reveal to us a sufficient Reason for it, and reconcile mens opinions to the Wisdom and Justice of Providence. The impunity of ill Men in the worst Actions becomes sometimes very intelligible to us even in this World, by the after disposal of things. This we have excellently discoursed of in *Plutarchs* incomparable Treatise *De sera Numinis vindicta*. Had the famous *Constantine* suffered what was due to the eminent sins of his Youth, what a loss had the World had of the Virtues of his riper years? and as *Plutarch* tells the *Athenians*, if *Themistocles* had been punished as the enormities of his Youth deserved, and *Miltiades* for his rebellion in *Chersonesus*, where had been

been (sayes he) those great Victories, those two afterwards obtained in the Plains of *Marathon* on the Coasts of *Arlesia?* and at the River *Eurimedon?* The truth is, in all humane Judgment we are bounded by particulars. Individual actions are the Grounds upon which Men proceed. Nor can they look forward to know what any will be hereafter. But God has the *whole* of every Man before him, and has not only respect to the All of every Action, but to the *All* of every *Man*, in the *whole* of of his Actings from the *First* to the *Last*. Thirdly. There is a *Harmony* in Providence, which (unless we knew All, from its *Beginning* to its *Ending*) we can never fully comprehend. 'Tis one intire *System*, a compleat *Bottom* wherein all *Ends* are exactly wound up: A rare contrivance of *Divine Wisdom*: A curious piece of Divine Workmanship, wherein all particulars are so Interwoven as to make up the beauty of the whole. All the passages of the world, from first to last, have, in the providential Dominion of God over them, some dependency each upon other, and are not to be fully judged off singly, and a part. No One Action but relates to Millions of others; nay, has some reference to all others from the first to the last of the world. Each particular hath some reference to the

whole

whole, like the Parts of a Natural Body, where every Part refers to the Whole: And is not, in its use, to be fully comprehended without an exact knowledge of the Whole. Every part of Providence hath somewhat in it Relative to all the rest. Though God be Just in each particular, yet he still executes his Justice to every part with reference to the Whole; And so, Times and Orders all particulars that the *beautiful* season of every part is, when it bears its exact proportion to the *Oeconomy* of the Whole. Nor can we suppose this to be otherwise, but that God, who by an Infinite comprehension had all things present and before him, should so rank and dispose them, that at last the whole business of the World, should appear but One complicated and orderly united *Means* to bring about the first designed *Ends*.

This consideration of our own incapacity to make a full and compleat Judgment of the whole, or of many parts of Divine Providence, ought to prevent such rash Censures as Men are too apt to make upon it: And to perswade them not to *deny* it, where they cannot fully *comprehend* it: And to answer, in many cases, the doubts men may propose to themselves about this matter; but does not answer this Objection fully. Because 'tis not to be denied,

denied, but that there are very many particular caſes wherein Gods Juſtice and his Providence are viſibly not to be reconciled together in this World. And upon that conſideration I ſay 'tis much more reconcileable and natural to ſuppoſe the Being of a future *ſtate* after this life (by which all Objections againſt Providence are fully anſwered) then to make that an Objection againſt Providence, and deny the Being of it thereupon, and that upon theſe two grounds. Firſt, the exiſtence of a *general* Providence is, upon convincing evidence proved to us. We have as good Reaſon to believe God *Rules* the World, as we have to believe that he is *Juſt*. And in that caſe, when we find we cannot, here in this World, accommodate his *Rule* and his *Juſtice* together, 'tis not reaſonable to *oppoſe* the one by the other (when neither can be rationally denied) but to admit a *ſtate* beyond this World, by which they are both ſafely reconciled. Secondly, there is nothing in the admiſſion of a future ſtate, in it ſelf any way unreaſonable: Nay, the exiſtence of ſuch a future ſtate after this life, beſides the evidence it has from the notion of Providence, has alſo many other rational proofs peculiarly appurtenant to it, and is a thing in it ſelf, upon other grounds, highly probable. He

that will bottom a denial of Providence ſingly upon this Objection, muſt prove that there is no ſtate of things after this life, or at leaſt, have it granted to him. The proof of it is impoſſible, and the grant of it were very unreaſonable, when 'tis a natural and neceſſary conſequent to all that rational proof that is made of a Providence in general, and I cannot deny the one without rejecting the other; the thing in its own Nature, is greatly credible, and has been believed in all Ages, not only by the greateſt part of the wiſeſt and beſt, but even of the rudeſt and moſt barbarous common ſentiment, which ſtrongly tend to perſwade us the belief of it is founded in the dictates of right Reaſon, and the common Sentiments of Nature.

'Tis to be taken as an undeniable Truth, that the exiſtence of Providence, and the Being of a future ſtate have a neceſſary dependency each upon other, and are no way ſeperable. If there be a Providence, there muſt be a future ſtate after this life. And if there be a ſtate hereafter, it muſt relate to a Providence here: The *Epicureans* therefore deny both. *Epicurus* under all his preſſures made his retreat to this Maxime, *That there had been* a time when we were *not in Being*, and there would be a time when we ſhould exiſt

exiſt no more. Of how little a ſignification to the World the bare notion of a Deity would prove, abſtracted from the belief of a Providence here, or any ſtate hereafter, is eaſie to diſcern. The Truth is, whoever admits the exiſtence of a *Supreme* and firſt being, will be rationally forced to acknowledge the other two. If there be a God, he muſt Rule: Infinite power cannot be ſet by; and if he do Rule, there muſt be a reverſion of rewards and puniſhments after this life, ſo *Plutarch* obſerves. The ſame Reaſon which confirms Providence, doth likewiſe confirm the immortality of the Soul: And if the one be taken away, the other follows; ſo that the great fundamentals of all Virtue and Religion will appear ſufficiently juſtified to us from the regular determinations of right Reaſon.

Upon theſe and many other invincible proofs is Gods providential Rule over the World eſtabliſhed. The true notion of which frees us from the manifold abſurdities of *Epicurus* his *chance*, and *Chryſippus* his *deſtiny*, the two wide extreams on either hand. The the firſt is the pooreſt account that ever was given of ſuch Oeconomy as we ſee in this World, and a monſtrous piece of folly, to think *Chance* ſhould be *Predominant* whilſt

infinite *wiſdome* is exiſting. The other ſuch an unreaſonable and abuſive fiction of Providence, (if related to God) as renders it inconſiſtent with the freedom of a Rational Agent. The one denies all providence and makes God to do nothing: The other deſtroys mans freedome, and makes God to do every thing. Both equally falſe. 'Tis true, that God Rules over the *Whole*; And 'tis as true that his *Rule* no way deſtroys the freedom of mans *will*. Nor is the world ſubjected to any ſuch thing as a *Stoical Fate*, from any neceſſary connection of cauſes, but all the actions of men proceed from the free choice and determinations of their own breaſts. Every mans own *Will* being the true cauſe of his own *doings*.

Thus much may ſerve to ſilence and ſhame all the ignorant doubts and profane denials of providence, to aſſure men there is a God that Rule's in the earth, and to juſtifie the exerciſe of a ſupreme *Dominion* over the world. Upon the truth of which the validity of all Divine Laws muſt neceſſarily depend. Such who (in the third place) admit the being of *God*, of *Providence*, and *Religion*, but reject the *Chriſtian-religion* and conſequently the *Bible*, as not true, and cloſe with ſome other in oppoſition to it, againſt thoſe the whole of this

this diſcourſe will chiefly tend. If the *Divine Authority* of the *Bible* be ſufficiently made good, and the *Scriptures* proved in trueth to be what themſelves tell us they are, *Laws ſent us from God, by which he will Rule and judge the world*, two things will reſult from it. firſt, All *other Religions* but the *Chriſtian* will thereby appear to be *falſe* and *fictitious*. Secondly, Such who have embraced the *Chriſtian Profeſſion* will be abundantly confirmed in the *verity* thereof, freed from all ſuch doubts as may ariſe about it, and be aſcertained of the truth of thoſe *grounds* upon which it is eſtabliſhed.

In the proſecution of this matter, when we deal with *Antiſcriptural men*, ſuch as pay no homage at all to the *Bible*, nor yield any obedience to its Authority, two things are to be avoided, and ought not to be inſiſted on, in order to their confutation. Firſt, 'Tis not a reaſonable ſtep towards it, to ſay the *Scriptures* are the *Principle* upon which our *Religion* is *built*, and therefore ought to be *granted* to us: Becauſe, in every particular Science, ſome *Principles* muſt be *granted* as the *Subſtratum*, without which it cannot be upheld, and by a *denial* of which the *being* of it is *ſubverted*. This unwary demand is the ready way to fix *every* man in his *own profeſſion* whatever it be, and to prevent the moſt important

Diſcourſe of *Religion* amongſt *all* ſuch who have already embraced *any* Religion, for there is *no* Religion without ſome *prime Principles* upon which 'tis erected, and by the *grant* of which it will be eſtabliſhed. And as we are ſure 'twill be equally expected, ſo there is no better ground upon which it can be denyed: Nor no leſs reaſon why *we* ſhould admit the principles of *other mens* Religion, then *they* grant *ours*. And if ſo, we ſhall ſoon come to a full point in all our *debates* about *different Religions*. To ſuch who have already cloſed with the *Chriſtian-profeſſion*, this holds good. And he that admits not the *Scriptures* as the firſt *Principle* and *Rule* of all diſcourſe upon any internal point of the *Chriſtian-Religion*, is not to be diſputed with. Becauſe, in diſowning that principle, he deſtroys the *being* of the *Religion* he is contending about, and ſubverts the *whole* by the manner of his diſputing about a *part*. But when we deal with men *out* of the *Church* and *Enemies* to it, and the doubt is about the *Scripture it ſelf*, we cannot otherwiſe defend it then by admitting it a matter *Debateable*, and indeavouring its juſtification upon principles *common* to us *both*, and ſuch *rational grounds* as carry in them the greateſt *aptneſs* to *convince* ſuch *opponents*.

'Tis

'Tis not to be denied but that in all Rational enquiries after truth and all *humane*-debates, there muſt be ſome *common maxims* and *principles* acknowledged on *all ſides*, without which there can be no due meaſures of any diſcourſe, nor any Standard by which a man can proceed either to ſatisfy himſelf or convince another, and 'twill be utterly impoſſible ever to come to a rational end of any debate whatever. For, If *one* thing be to be proved (as it muſt be where things are in controverſy) by *another*, and every thing may be ſtill denied, we muſt prove *in infinitum*. He that oppoſeth needs nothing to help him but a bare *Negative*, and he that is to prove will be loſt in an endleſs circle. Some principles therefore there are which govern all mens thoughts and diſcourſes as things *granted* by them, and are of abſolute neceſſity to the rational conduct of the World. And they are of two ſorts; Firſt, Such as are in themſelves ſo obviouſly true to our *Senſes* and *Reaſon* that they gain an *Univerſal Aſſent*, and are approved by the common *Vote* of *Mankind*. Theſe are ſuch things as no man can be ſuppoſed to deny if he would, no more then he can deny himſelf to be *Reaſonable*; and do diſcover to us the truth of the rational faculty, by the natural Emanation of which we